# WINGS and NO EYES

A

COMEDY OF LOVE

PHILIP CRUTCHER

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# WINGS AND NO EYES

Lady Gwendolyn at Work.

# WINGS AND NO EYES

## A COMEDY OF LOVE

BY

PHILIP CRUTCHER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
VIRGINIA HARGRAVES WOOD

"And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath love's mind of any judgment taste;
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste."
—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

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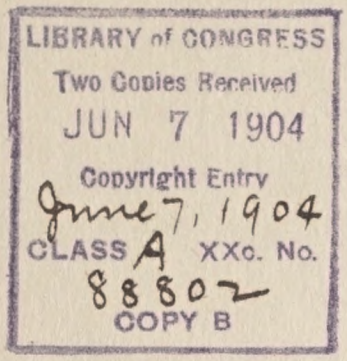


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FIRST IMPRESSION
MAY 1904

To
MY MOTHER.

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# WINGS AND NO EYES

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BIRTH OF ROMANCE.

WOULD you know, most inquisitive reader, how stories are made? Shall I reveal to you the secrets of the craft? Do you wish to penetrate into its inner mysteries?

The process is quite similar to the manner in which poor Feathertop was constructed; and although few of us intend what we so grandly call "the children of our brains" to pose as scarecrows, yet, sad to relate, they frequently end as he did.

Upon a broomstick of fact is placed a pumpkin head for a hero. After a large amount of more or less judicious padding has entirely covered the original foundation, he is decked out in old clothes and bits of ribband. Then his fond constructress, having girt a sword of lath to his side, calls sharply, "Diccon! A coal for his pipe!" And thereupon the callow youth steps out to try his fortune in the world.

But he must continue to smoke. Woe be unto that tale which allows the interest of the public to grow cold. Like the unfortunate Feathertop, it is cast out from among men; and it becomes a laughing-stock to the critics, and a source of despair to the book-dealers.

Does it amaze you, reader, that I should derive the inspiration of an author from—ahem—the lower regions? It is customary for writers to talk grandly of the "divine afflatus" and the "celestial muse." But does not fiction consist mainly in lies, and who can inspire such lies so well as the father of them?

Be these things as they may, I do not believe that John Cobbs, as he drove steadily along a country road in the State of Mississippi one hot day in July, had any idea that he was a lie. And if you had suggested such a thing to him you would probably have had your head broken in two seconds.

He had not the faintest intention of becoming a character in a novel; indeed he had much more important things to think of. He thought that his dinner at the farmhouse had been dashed bad and dashed dear, except that he used stronger adjectives. He knew that the sun was hot; he was sure his collar was wilting, and he wondered if the old negress had told him the truth, when she said that he could reach Judithland before supper-time.

As for books, he had a very small opinion of them. They were good to sell, of course, for a man must live; and in order to sell them it was equally necessary that he should know something of their contents. But the superior points of his encyclopædia, as well as the demerits of the others, could be most easily learned from the prospectus, and an unscrupulous disposition and a mendacious tongue supplied all deficiencies.

He had a supreme contempt for the fellow who devoted his leisure hours to reading, when there were so many really sensible amusements to be found in a live town. Why should the idiot shut himself up in his room at the hotel like a mud-turtle, when he knew the poker-rooms were running full blast just across the street; where a lot of

good fellows had a nice little game with a fifty-cent limit; besides a dumb waiter to bring up the liquors and cigars and a live black one to serve them? It was really astonishing that any man could be such a dashed fool, and he was dashed glad that he had been better raised.

John Cobbs was also engaged in bestowing mental maledictions upon the man whose suggestion had induced him to make the present trip.

It was in the town which he had been working for several days before; and, probably with the hope of relieving himself from a persistent nuisance, this man had told him that many refined and cultivated people occupied country homes on the road to Judithland, and that book agents seldom went that way.

Fired by the thought of conquering a hitherto independent country, he had hired a team and had started at sunrise. But his budding hopes were destined to a most grievous disappointment.

True, he had found a number of houses whose inmates were apparently prosperous in a rural fashion. They would willingly have talked to him all day, and a few would even have allowed him to talk; but literature was to them what $x$ is to the mathematician, with the sole exception that it was an unknown quantity which they had no desire to solve.

Some of them read a daily chapter in the Bible, and quite a number the weekly newspaper; but when he suggested the investment of ninety dollars in an encyclopædia, even though payable as it was at the rate of five dollars per month, their native-born politeness hardly restrained them from laughing at him.

And so John Cobbs was angry and tired, and when he came to the gate which led to another country residence, his first impulse was to pass by on the road to town.

But a book agent who becomes discouraged at rebuffs would certainly not survive in the struggle for existence; and John Cobbs was an organism sufficiently plastic to adapt himself to any environment.

Besides, this mansion seemed to him to be different from the places where he had been failing all that morning.

It stood on a slight eminence in a large enclosure of some twenty acres, thickly planted with ancient magnolia trees. Their period of bloom had passed; but their dark-green foliage formed a charming frame for the house, which appeared in their shade like a picture of home and comfort. John Cobbs could see only a little of the building on account of the trees, but the wide verandas and the stately Doric columns convinced him that it was the residence of a family of a better class than those with whom he had been contending during the day.

He was certain that people who lived in such a fine house would be sufficiently intelligent to require an encyclopædia and to appreciate his voluble recommendations, and if it had been possible his freckled face would have glowed with satisfaction.

But this could not be, because Dame Nature, assisted by the sun and sundry draughts from a pocket flask which he carried, had already bestowed upon his countenance a shade of crimson which effectually prevented him from blushing, and which was almost as bright as the color of his hair. Indeed, if properly attired, he could have well represented the Egyptian god of evil, Typhon, without the aid of a mask.

I would not have you believe for an instant, however, that John Cobbs' character bore more than a faint resemblance to the principle of evil. If I allowed such an impression to abide in your thoughts, oh gentle maiden, your timid soul would at once endow him with all the

attributes of the villain in the play, and raise up dire scenes of battle, murder and sudden death, because a red-headed book agent was going through a gate which led to a plantation home.

No; John Cobbs was a man like other men. He was certainly not immaculate; but if he was no better than the average he was likewise no worse, and not at all qualified to pose as the villain in the story.

Having decided to try his luck once more, John stepped out of his buggy for the purpose of opening the large carriage gate, which barred a well-kept winding road leading up to the country mansion. He found, however, that the gate was fastened with two stout padlocks. This evidence of inhospitality was exceedingly uncommon, and puzzled our book agent considerably.

But there was a smaller gate for the use of pedestrians which was not locked; and after hitching his horse to the fence and obtaining his case of samples from the back of the buggy, John walked slowly up the shady avenue in the direction of the house. The comparative coolness was very pleasant to him after his hot, sunny drive, and he thought how fine it would be if he could spend a week lying in a hammock under the trees and doing absolutely nothing. He speedily realized that he had no prospect of such a vacation, but as he advanced he became more and more convinced that his chances for selling an encyclopædia were quite good.

When he had gone about half the distance from the gate to the house a peculiar noise attracted his attention. It sounded like a person beating vigorously on a tin pan, and John at once supposed that the old method of persuading a swarm of bees that it was going to rain was in operation.

His supposition, however, was speedily corrected when

a turn of the road revealed to him a strange sight which startled even his equanimity.

Upon a level, shady place under the trees two men attired in tin armor were banging each other with swords, as John Cobbs afterward expressed it, "to beat the band." The combat was progressing in the usual stage fashion, where the swords are struck together first above, and then below, and then above again, with every precaution against hitting your antagonist.

At one side of the arena, upon a carved oak chair, a young woman was seated. She was attired in a loose gown of purple silk, caught in at the waist by a golden belt, and embroidered across the breast with three golden lions. Her sleeves were so wide at the wrist that they almost reached the ground, and their borders were also richly embellished with gold thread. Upon her head she wore a conical cap about two feet high, encircled at its base by a golden crown, while from its apex depended a lace veil which fell about her shoulders.

Her long, black hair was braided in two heavy plaits, which hung upon either side of her face and extended down in front of her. Her face itself was somewhat prepossessing. She had a white, smooth skin, a small mouth and good teeth; although the novelist perceives the latter, and not the book agent. Her nose had a saucy tip-tilt which contrasted strangely with the serious expression in her large eyes.

Add to these characteristics a height of nearly six feet, and a form verging upon stoutness, and you have a fair description of the maiden upon whom John Cobbs' bewildered gaze fell that July afternoon.

Kneeling in front of the seated lady a slim, yellow woman, clad in a variegated dress of orange and blue, supported a thin board upon her back which her mistress was

using as a table. And near her right side a small, black boy, in a fantastic costume of the same colors, also knelt, and held a gold-mounted ram's horn which apparently contained ink.

When John approached, the seated lady had ceased her writing and was gazing fixedly at nothing, with an intense, earnest expression upon her countenance; while she held a quill pen poised in the air as if ready for instant use.

The fighting knights beat rhythmically, but just as our visitor paused in amazement at the scene before him one of them missed his guard and received the full force of his antagonist's blow upon the shield which he held on his arm.

He dropped his sword and shield at once and seized his left arm with his right hand, while something which sounded very much like a naughty word escaped from between the bars of his visor.

"Sir Damian," said the seated lady, in an austere voice, "I am surprised at you."

"Yes, Mistis," returned the man in armor. "I's sorry, but he hit me on de arm."

"Well, resume your weapons," she replied, "and proceed with the combat. And remember always, both of you, that a knight must *never* drop his sword."

Whereupon, as if an idea had suddenly seized her, she dipped her pen in the ram's horn and commenced to write rapidly upon the paper on the board before her.

While John Cobbs stood in uncertainty as to what he ought to do, an elderly lady, who was standing near the seated woman, came forward and accosted him.

She was short and fat, and her dress was like her companion's in design. Her gown, however, was of sapphire blue, with a silver girdle, and a large boar's head embroidered in silver on her breast. Instead of a golden

crown she had a silver coronet of oak and strawberry leaves interlaced, and she carried on her wrist a papier-maché imitation of a hawk, which was exceedingly life-like.

She raised a pair of gold-mounted lorgnettes to her eyes and examined her visitor critically.

"Fair sir," she said, in a low voice, "what do you want?"

"I beg pardon, Miss," commenced our book agent, "but is the keeper here?"

"The Lord Keeper of the Seal, mean you?" she reponded. "No, he bides not at this castle. What do *you* want?"

"I want to see the doctor in charge, Miss. I've got something here that will interest him."

"There's no leech here," she said, quickly, but in the same low voice. "And you must go at once, or I will have the dogs set on you. That is," she corrected, "I will have the warders fling you from the battlements."

"But, Miss," he expostulated, "there must be somebody in charge, and I want to show him my encyclopædia. It's mighty full on the subject of—well, you know—sick people."

"There's nobody sick here," she said, "and we can't stop to look at books. If you will come back in a month we will see about it, but you must go now. If you were to interrupt her it might be weeks before she could go on. Please go."

"Well, Miss," he replied, "I don't want to worry you, and as there don't seem to be anybody 'round but looneys, I reckon I'll go. I'm sorry I ain't seen the doctor, though. Can't I just go up to the house to see him a minute?"

"No," she said positively, clenching her fist as she spoke, "you must go at once,—now. If Gwendolyn were to see you, you might spoil everything. You *must* go."

"Well," he said, as he turned away, "I don't like to go

without showing my books, but I reckon I'll have to. Good-day, Miss."

"Good-afternoon," she replied. "That is, gin ye god den, fair sir."

"That's the dashedest funny madhouse I ever got onto," said our book agent to himself, as he walked rapidly down the avenue. "There don't seem to be nobody in charge of the looneys, and where in h—l did they get their crazy clothes?"

While John Cobbs was resuming his journey toward Judithland I wish to make a few remarks in regard to the use of profane language. I regret to say that our friend was in the habit of garnishing his conversation with an assortment of more or less vigorous oaths; and, as a conscientious novelist, I would prefer to report his speeches as they were actually uttered. But John himself never cursed in the presence of ladies; and, as the audience of a writer of fiction is largely feminine, I have in the following pages suppressed most of his profanity and substituted milder expletives. I am aware that this is an offense against truth, but I am sure that in the present instance the end justifies the means; and, besides, as I remarked at the commencement of this chapter, fiction is mostly lies, anyhow.

## CHAPTER II.

### HOW TO BUY A STORE.

IT was quite late when John Cobbs arrived at Judithland. Oh! he was tired, and hot, and dirty, and after putting up his team at the livery stable and making arrangements to have it returned to its owner the next day, he was very glad to have his supper and retire to his room at the only hotel as soon as possible.

He was curious to know something about the house where he had stopped that afternoon, but he felt so cross that he thought it best to have no unnecessary conversation. Since he had been a book agent he had learned that good policy required him to keep his temper to himself, so far as possible. He came near having a quarrel with a stranger at the stable about the distance which he had come that day. He knew the man was right, but he insisted that he was wrong merely because he was entirely used up.

Indeed, we are most of us that way. There is not one person in a thousand who is willing to admit frankly that he is mistaken, even if he has become convinced of it in his own mind. If cornered, where there is no escape from incontrovertible facts, he will almost invariably become angry. And when I use the masculine pronoun, I refer to the feminine also. You may be sure that I do.

John did not arise the next morning until nearly nine

o'clock, which was an unusual occurrence in his life, for his energetic disposition generally drove him from his bed about six. It had rained and turned cooler during the night; and this, combined with his long sleep and the fact that the hotel was new and much better than the ordinary country inn, put him in a very good humor and made him look upon the world in a more optimistic frame of mind.

He rather admired Judithland. It seemed to be a thriving little town surrounded by a rich section of country, and he thought that it might do well if it were not for their dashed prohibition nonsense.

To be sure, he had done a pretty good business in prohibition towns recently, but no gentleman really wants to travel where he has to treat his friends in his own room. It is too much trouble, and it does not seem sociable, either, when a man is used to the real thing, concocted by an expert and served over a gorgeous mahogany bar in a room whose walls are covered with works of art and whose shelves are lined with cut glass.

He was just meditating how he would find out where to go to have his flask refilled, when a small boy came into the hotel rotunda and thrust a bill into his hand. This announced in large letters that the entire stock, furniture and fixtures of Trescott's bookstore would be sold that day at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, regardless of cost. It was stated that the sale would commence at twelve o'clock, and that the stock would be divided into lots to suit purchasers.

John Cobbs had been on the lookout for an opportunity of this kind for a number of months. He had saved some money and had inherited a small house in his native town which he could easily sell, and he was anxious to settle down in a business of his own and stop traveling.

He thought Judithland would suit him very well, in

spite of its prohibition, and he stepped up to the clerk to make a few inquiries.

"I say, Bo," he began, spreading the bill out in front of him, "do you know anything about this?"

"Oh, Trescott. Yes," responded the clerk. "He's kept a bookstore 'round the corner for about twenty years. The old fellow died last month, and his wife's going to sell out and go to live with her son in Vicksburg. They tell me he's doing mighty well over there. I've been trying to get the old man to put in a news-stand here, but he's afraid somebody else will get the store, and he don't think there's room for two. Here, Front," he continued to the bellboy, "sixteen wants a pitcher of ice water."

"Did old Trescott have a pretty good trade?" asked John.

"Well, yes, a right good trade. He didn't make no fortune out of it, but he made a living, and he laid up something, too. I should say that with her five thousand from the Woodmen of the World, Mrs. Trescott ought to be worth about fifteen thousand, and that ain't bad for a country town, you know."

"No, that's good enough," said John. "Can you tell me where I can find the old lady?"

"If you want to see her on business," returned the clerk, "you'd better see Horace Layton. He's her attorney, and he's been settling up the old man's estate. His office is upstairs over the bookstore, and that's the second door 'round the corner that way," he continued, pointing with his hand.

John Cobb always prided himself upon making up his mind quickly.

"What's the use in studying about a thing?" he would say. "If you want to do it, do it right off and don't go fooling 'round."

When he reached the store he stepped inside and asked the young girl who came to wait on him for a New Orleans paper. While she went to get it he looked critically around the shop. What he saw evidently pleased him, for he smiled slightly.

The store contained a few shelves of novels and a miscellaneous assortment of stationery and fancy articles, such as are usually found in similar establishments in small towns. Near the door was a glass showcase where tobacco was displayed, the sight of which broadened John's smile into a grin. Near the cigar lighter a jet black cat was slumbering peacefully.

The general appearance of the store indicated thrift and enterprise on a small scale, and there was an air of neatness about the stock which betrayed a feminine touch.

"I say, Miss," said John to the girl when she returned with his paper, "they tell me you're going to be sold out this morning."

"Yes, sir," she replied, somewhat sadly. "Everything is to be sold at twelve o'clock to-day. I don't know where I can find another place."

"Why, I reckon places are rather scarce in this little town. But what do you want with another one? A good-looking girl like you ought to get married."

"They won't anybody ask me," she said, smiling. "You ain't looking for a wife, sir, are you?"

"No; I'm already married," John returned, chuckling. "Got a wife and six small children, three of them in the arms."

"Triplets?" she said. "I'm sorry for you, sir. That's worse than being out of a place. You must have an awful hard time."

"Oh, medium, medium," said John. "A fellow gets

used to troubles of that kind. Do you do a pretty good business here, Miss?"

"Why, yes, sir. Mr. Trescott said it used to be better before the hard times came on, but it's been right good, anyway."

"Are you running the machine since old Trescott died, Miss?"

"Pretty much so, yes, sir. Mr. Layton is in charge, but I stay here all day and do the selling, and Mr. Clark comes in the evening to write up the books."

"And where might I find this fellow Layton?"

"Why, his office is upstairs; but he don't generally get down before ten. It's most ten now, though," she went on, glancing at the clock on the wall.

"Well, I'll go upstairs," said John. "And you take my advice about getting married, Miss," he continued, as he turned away.

"If your wife dies and you poison the children, come back and see me," she called after him as he went out of the door.

John had to wait only a few minutes upstairs in company with the diminutive office boy before the person whom he came to see arrived.

"Mr. Layton?" he asked, rising. "Cobbs my name. I understand you've got the store downstairs to sell."

"Why, Mr. Cobbs, I am charmed to make your acquaintance," returned the lawyer, suavely, as he shook hands with his visitor. "Take a chair. When did you come to town? Jerry, get the gentleman some ice-water."

"No, thanks," said John. "I got here yesterday. Have you got the store downstairs to sell?"

"Why, yes, it is to be sold to-day at auction. You see, Mrs. Trescott wants to get her affairs straightened up as soon as possible so that she can leave town, and we are

going to sell out everything, including the fixtures. Are you interested in bookstores, Mr. Cobbs?"

"Things generally go pretty cheap at auctions," said John.

"Why, sometimes, I admit that they do," returned the attorney. "But there has been considerable interest aroused in this sale around town, and a number of people are going to bid; and, while we expect some lots to go for less than they are worth, I think that we will make it up on others."

"Don't think you will. What will you take for the whole business?"

"Why, I will have to consider about that. We had not expected to sell out that way. Let me see the invoices, Jerry. They are over there in the pigeon-hole on the right. Ah, here we are," he continued, as he turned over the papers. "The entire stock, with the furniture and fixtures, was invoiced at five thousand, eight hundred and fifty-two dollars and sixty-one cents. Now, the good-will of the business is worth at least five thousand; but as Mrs. Trescott is anxious to get away, we will waive that point and knock off the extra eight hundred and odd dollars and let you have the entire affair, lock, stock and barrel, for five thousand, cash. What do you say?"

"If the goods agree with the invoices," said John, "I'll give you two thousand."

"My dear sir; I could not think of recommending any such price to my client. Why, consider the value of the business. You can easily clear twenty-five hundred to three thousand dollars a year, and fifty per cent. on your investment certainly is a good return. Give me five thousand."

"Two thousand goes; no more."

"Why, Mrs. Trescott wants to get away," said the attor-

ney, "and she might be willing to take forty-five hundred. It is simply robbery to ask her, but if you will take it at that I will go to see her about it at once."

"No," said John. "Two thousand is plenty. I won't give any more."

"Well, then, I see that we can't trade, Mr. Cobbs. I cannot see my client give away her property. And yet, auction sales are any amount of bother. Wouldn't you consider it at four?"

"No," said John, determinedly. "I'll come up two hundred and no more. You can't get twelve hundred for it at auction, and you know it."

"Well," the lawyer returned, rising and extending his hand. "I see that we cannot trade, and so I will have to ask you to excuse me, Mr. Cobbs. I have a number of things to attend to before the sale. I hope that you will be with us some time, and that I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again. Judithland is a good town, and we would like to have you settle here."

"Give you twenty-five hundred," said John Cobbs.

"Why, now, Mr. Cobbs," responded the attorney, "to tell you the truth, we hate to see the bookstore broken up. It's the only one in town, and it would be very inconvenient here without it. If you will give three thousand I will recommend Mrs. Trescott to take it."

"Split the difference and she goes," said John.

"Well," Horace Layton replied, "I don't feel like I am doing right by my client in letting it go so cheap. But it's a great nuisance to sell things in small lots at auction, so I will go up to see Mrs. Trescott, and if she is willing you can have it for twenty-seven fifty. Will you wait for me here? I won't be gone ten minutes."

"I'll wait downstairs," said John. "And, say," he con-

tinued, as they went out of the door, "you must throw in the girl for good measure. I'm stuck on her looks."

"Miss Mamye, you mean? Yes, she's a nice girl, and a right good clerk, too."

"Now, what has she been getting a month, Bo?"

"Twenty dollars is what Trescott paid her, and I kept her on at the same after he died. I have no doubt that she would be glad to stay with you."

"All right, Bo. I reckon she will. She'd be a dashed funny duck if she didn't."

John Cobbs placed his paper carefully in his coat pocket, and after pausing in front of the store to light a cigar, he put his hands in his trousers pockets and sauntered slowly back to the rear of the store where the "saleslady" was seated. The consciousness of having made an excellent bargain added to his cheerfulness and to his good opinion of his own business ability. The girl rose and came forward as he approached.

"Sit down, Miss Mamye, sit down," he said, as he perched himself on an office stool and tilted his hat on the back of his head. "It's a fine day for an auction."

"Yes," she replied. "It's rather warm, though."

"You ain't found that place I was talking to you about yet, have you?" he asked, with a grin.

"Your wife ain't dead, is she?" returned the girl. "Because if she is I won't say yes unless you get rid of the children."

"Oh, you won't mind the children. There's only six, and they're regular beauties, just like me."

She looked at him critically, with an amused expression in her large black eyes.

"They must be *beautiful,*" she said. "But an old widower is bad enough to take care of without a whole lot of children."

"You don't know what a nice fellow I am," he responded. "I'm a regular lady-killer."

"Of all things, I despise a married flirt," she said. "If I marry you, you won't do no more flirting. I'll put my foot square down on that."

He cast his eyes down to the floor where the tips of her toes were projecting from underneath her dress.

"Ho," he replied, "a little foot like that couldn't stop nothing."

"You wait and see," she returned, as she rose and went to the front of the store, where an elderly gentleman had entered and stopped in front of the tobacco counter.

After supplying him with some cigars and changing a five-dollar bill, she attended to the wants of a tiny negro boy, who asked for "fibe cents' wuth ob tizu paper, ob ebry color dat dare is." This requisition took her some time to fill, as there happened to be more shades in the drawer than there were sheets in five cents' worth, and in concluding such an important purchase the small darkey was naturally deliberate in making up his mind which to choose.

She had just completed the transaction when Horace Layton came in.

"Good-morning, Miss Mamye," he said. "Well, Mr. Cobbs, it's all right and the bargain is closed. Do you want to make the transfer right away?"

"Yes," said John. "I'd like to do it to-day."

"Very well. Here are the invoices, with the cost price of each article. If you like to check over the stock, Miss Mamye can help you while I draw up the bill of sale. This is Mr. Cobbs, Miss Mamye Clay. Mr. Cobbs has bought the store."

"Yes, and if you want to stay at the same rate, Miss Mamye, you can," said John. "I reckon we will get on all right together."

"Thank you, sir," said Mamye Clay. "I should like to keep the place."

"Now, how do you propose to pay, Mr. Cobbs?" asked the lawyer.

"Why, my money is deposited in the Sixteenth National in New Orleans. If you wire them they'll tell you it's all right."

"Very well, then. I will get the bank to telegraph them, and if you get through we will make the transfer this evening."

After a day of hard work the sale was finally completed at about eleven o'clock, and Horace Layton having undertaken to accompany Miss Mamye to her home, John Cobbs locked his store and went to bed in the hotel, with the proud consciousness that he was at last a prominent business man in a thriving town.

## CHAPTER III.

### A GAME FOR A LOVE.

JOHN COBBS spent the next morning in investigating his new business and making arrangements for its proper transaction. He wrote to a real estate agent in his native town for the purpose of placing his cottage on sale. This would give him some additional capital, which he foresaw would be very useful. He planned many improvements and additions to the store, and he intended to carry them into effect as soon as circumstances would permit.

So occupied was he that he actually forgot his pocket flask, and it was five o'clock before the insistent demands of habit forced him to remember that he had not had a drink for two whole days.

He had just resolved to go upstairs to ask Horace Layton where he could obtain some whisky, when that gentleman entered the store, accompanied by a smaller man, who appeared to be a number of years his junior.

"Mr. Cobbs," the lawyer said, "this is Mr. Elmore. There are several of us who have been in the habit of dropping in here summer afternoons to play chess. I suppose you don't mind?"

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Elmore," said John, shaking hands with the newcomer. "Why, of course I don't mind, Bo. I'll take a hand myself. Is chess anything like poker?"

"No," said Horace Layton, laughing. "Not very much. There is no poker game running here just now, but if we start one in the fall I'll put you on. We can teach you to play chess, too, if you like. You don't play for money."

"Oh," said John, with a falling inflection and sudden lack of interest in his voice. "You're welcome to play here, fellows, whenever you like. I'm dashed sorry I can't treat, but you see how it is," he continued, holding up his empty flask and looking through it. "Can you tell me where to go?"

"Why, there's a man here on Elm street who can fill it," the attorney replied, "but it's mighty poor stuff. You go to the negro shoemaker's shop and ask if he has any molasses, and he will show you how to get it. You had better order direct from the distiller, though, if you need much. I have to defend that negro every now and then," he continued, "but I've quit buying from him."

"I can't get along without it," said John. "I don't see how you fellows stand it. Dashed if I could."

"Why, Dave here never did drink, except at people's houses once in awhile," returned the attorney. "I used to tank up regular before the county went dry, but since then I've gradually gotten out of the habit. You see, a man can't drink by himself, and it isn't much fun to have to take your friends to your office, with nothing to offer them but plain whisky and water. And then my jug was always giving out and I couldn't stand the blind tiger article, and so I gradually got out of the habit. I've got some beer in my office now, if you would like to have some. I hardly ever drink even that now myself."

"Why, thanks, Bo," said John. "That'll do fine till I can get something stronger."

"Well, let's go upstairs," said Horace. "Won't you have some, Dave?"

"No, I thank you," said David Elmore. "I will wait for you here."

They returned in a few minutes, and John offered the other two men cigars, which David refused.

"You ought to learn to smoke, Davy," said the lawyer, as he tilted himself back in an office chair and struck a match on the sole of his shoe. "You don't know how much fun you are missing. And say," he continued, after puffing vigorously at his cigar and getting it comfortably aglow, "I saw Jim Houston out on the street just now. He said he would be in in a few minutes. I want to make him play you a game to see which shall go to see Miss Columba to-night. Bless my boots, how the boy does blush. I say, Davy, you look like a schoolgirl."

And in fact David Elmore's cheeks had become almost as red as John Cobbs' neck. David was a handsome young fellow, slightly built, with curly yellow hair and a smooth, white face, on which the color came and went on very slight provocation.

"I don't want to go there," he stammered. "I don't go there. I haven't been there for a long time."

"I know you haven't," returned the attorney. "It has been a whole week, and Jim Houston will cut you out if you don't mind, 'cause he comes every night; and, speaking of angels, here he comes now."

The doctor, who entered the store just then, was a large, muscular man with jet black hair and a black, pointed beard. There was a determined look about his dark eyes which seemed to indicate a man accustomed to having his own way.

"This is Mr. Cobbs, Dr. Houston," said Horace. "I say, Jim, I want you and David to play a game to see which shall go to see Miss Columba to-night. Dave's willing if you are."

"I'm not," said David. "I'm not going."

"Why, I will play you, Dave, with a great deal of pleasure, if I'm not called out," said the doctor. "I left word at Wood's that they could telephone me here if I was wanted."

"Now, come off, Jim," said Horace Layton, laughing. "We know all about your practice, so it's no use putting on to us. These young doctors are funny, Mr. Cobbs," he continued. "I was walking out Great Street the other day, and here came Jim driving like Jehu, the son of Nimshi. Anybody would have thought that twenty people were dying and only waiting for him to help them off easy. And, bless my boots, I hadn't gone half a square before he came tearing back again. You ought to go 'round the other way, Jim. Oh, go on and play, Dave. We won't bother you any more. I want to talk to Mr. Cobbs."

Dr. Houston smiled slightly during the lawyer's speech, but without making any reply, he arose and took down a chessboard and men from a shelf near by, and he and David Elmore were soon intent upon the game.

"Where are you stopping, Mr. Cobbs?" asked Horace.

"I'm at the hotel now, Bo; but I want to get some other place. It comes too high for my health."

"I can take you to my boarding-house," said the attorney. "Mrs. Wilmot will be glad to have you. She hasn't any vacant room, but there is one upstairs back of my office that you could rent for five dollars a month."

"Thanks, Bo, that's a good scheme. What might the old lady charge for board?"

"She'll take you for five a week. She sets the best table in town, but she charges the same as the other boarding-houses. I'll take you to supper with me if you like, and you can make arrangements with her."

"All right, Bo. It's a go. And, say," John continued,

"I want to ask you about something before I forget it. I struck the dashedest funny madhouse out here when I was coming in I ever saw. The looneys were racking 'round the yard without anybody to boss 'em. You think it's safe?"

"Why, there isn't any asylum near here," said Horace, somewhat surprised. "Whereabouts did you see it?"

" 'Bout five miles out. It was a good-looking place, and I thought I'd sell some books. The big gate was locked, so I walked up the road, and I'm dashed if I didn't see two looneys in tin clothes banging at each other with sticks, to beat the band. A big girl with a blue horn on her head was sitting down, and a nigger was squatting in front of her with a board on her back. It was the dashedest outfit I ever saw, and I've seen a lot."

While John Cobbs was speaking the incredulous expression on the face of the lawyer suddenly changed, and at his conclusion he burst into a roar of laughter, which startled the chess players and interrupted the game for a few minutes.

"Why, man," he said, as soon as he was able to speak, "you must have seen Gwendolyn."

"Gwen what?" returned the ex-book agent. "Is that what you call the madhouse?"

"They are not mad," replied the attorney, still laughing. "That was Gwendolyn Rowena Montmorency, the celebrated novelist."

"Who's she?"

"You don't mean to say you never heard of Gwendolyn? Haven't you read 'The River of Blood,' or 'Love and Death'?"

"Never heard of them. What are they?"

"Why, they are stories,—novels. You make part of your

living selling them. You've about forty copies of her works out in front now."

"You say they ain't crazy? What were they doing it for?"

"She's writing a novel, and that's the way she gets up local color. She says the inspiration doesn't come unless she dresses the part. She makes about thirty thousand dollars a year at it."

"Thirty thousand!" exclaimed John Cobbs. "Oh, come off, Bo, you can't stuff me."

"Why, it's true," said the attorney, "ain't it, Jim? She is a funny girl, though. Her father's name was plain John Smith, and he made a pile of money and bought that place from a fellow named Broadnax. Gwendolyn and her aunt went to Europe after her father died, about ten years ago, and stayed until Gwendolyn started writing, when they came back here, and she's been hard at it ever since. Gwendolyn was christened Mary, but she don't let anybody call her that since she found out she could write. She fired old Dr. Chester because he called her Miss Smith one day about four months ago, and took up with Jim here."

"Yes," chimed in the doctor, "and she is the best patient I ever struck. She thought she had palpitation of the heart about a month ago and sent for me. There really was not anything the matter with her,—her heart is as sound as mine,—but, of course, I couldn't tell her that. I went there for four or five days, and I will be doggoned if an old nigger guy didn't meet me at the gate every time and make me put on a yellow gown and a white beard and wig and a fur cap. She paid me twenty-five dollars a visit, though, and I hope her heart will palpitate some more before long at the same price."

"Why, by all accounts, Jim," said Horace, smiling, "your heart is not as sound as you make out. At least

Miss Columba don't think so. You needn't look so embarrassed, Dave. Everybody knows that you and Jim are rivals. And, bless my boots," he continued, looking at the chessboard, "if you haven't let him smash you all to pieces in a few moves. Why, man, don't you see that he's bound to catch your queen in three or four moves? You might as well give that game up, Davy. The doctor will go to see Miss Columba to-night. There goes the closing bell, anyhow. You can walk home with Miss Mamye, Dave, to console yourself. She's sitting out in front there looking as lonesome as a young lawyer waiting for a client."

David Elmore muttered something indistinctly about not being able to play on account of a headache, took his straw hat in his hand, and walked slowly towards the front of the store. He said a few words to Miss Mamye Clay, who smiled; and after she had judiciously employed about five minutes in putting on her hat and patting her hair in front of a small glass, she bade a laughing good-night to the other gentlemen and went off with David.

"You know the stores close at six-thirty in summer, don't you, Mr. Cobbs?" Horace remarked. "After your man shuts up we will go to see Mrs. Wilmot. Are you coming to tea, Jim?"

The doctor excused himself on the ground of visiting a patient and drove off in his buggy, and after John Cobbs had seen that his store was properly closed for the night, he put the key into his trousers pocket and he and Horace sauntered up the street.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DOVE COTE AND THE TIGER'S LAIR.

WHILE the two young men were strolling toward Mrs. Wilmot's boarding-house, John Cobbs rapidly formed a plan of action which transcended in importance any design that he had hitherto conceived.

Here was a young, unmarried woman with an income of thirty thousand dollars a year, besides her other property, living in the country, without a man to take care of her.

Why should he not marry her? He had not the remotest idea that he would fail to win if he tried, and he considered that even if thirty thousand a year was not an equivalent for his own superlative merits, yet it would be very much better than peddling books or keeping a bookstore.

My gentle maiden reader, within whose breast the pleasing thoughts of Hymen are only just beginning to stir, do you think that all marriages are love matches? Well, in fact, they are; but not in the sense in which you understand it.

Ninety-nine men out of every hundred are dead in love with themselves, and they naturally suppose that any girl who possesses good taste is in the same condition. If she is coy, it is only proper maidenly reserve, and he is the more persistent to overcome it. If she displays her preference, it is a natural tribute to his attractions, and he basks in the sunshine of her refined discrimination.

There still remains the hundredth man, and if you persevere you may learn much about him between the covers of this book. You will not approve of his conduct; no woman does, even if she should happen to admire the man himself. He lives and moves, however, and therefore can hardly avoid coming into a story occasionally.

But, my dear maiden, you must not blame John Cobbs for having mercenary views of matrimony. He knew that women always fell in love with him; and, as he could not marry them all, he, of course, was in search of the one with the most money. For John thoroughly understood the value of a good income, and was determined not to let himself go until he obtained one. Women expected men to give up so many pleasures when they married that it was only fair for them to furnish a slight compensation in the way of a fortune.

"I say, Bo," he commenced, after they had walked a short distance; "this Miss Gwen—what's her name? Are you sure that she makes that much money?"

"Why, certainly," returned the lawyer. "I attend to her law business. Her father left nearly two hundred thousand when he died, and she was the only child. Her mother died years ago."

"Who was the old duck that ordered me off, then?"

"That must have been her aunt, Miss Grimes; or, as Gwendolyn has rechristened her, Miss Zenobia Dreadnaught. She lives there with her niece."

"I should think some fellow would have married her before now, if she gets that much money," said John. "Why didn't you try?"

"What! Gwendolyn?" replied the attorney, laughing. "Not much. She isn't my style. I would not take her for less than five times what she has."

"What's the matter with her, Bo?"

"Why, man, she'd make you dress up in tin armor when she was writing a book and go prancing around with a sword and shield fighting her negroes. One time she nearly starved herself and her aunt to death because her heroine was besieged in a castle and she could not manage a satisfactory way for the hero to rescue her. The darkeys used to slip into town after night and get something to eat, but she and her aunt were on bread and water for nearly two weeks before she got it fixed. Not any Gwendolyn in mine, thank you."

"I'd like to see a woman make me do what I didn't want to," said John. "I'd show her a thing or two, dashed if I wouldn't."

"Well, then, go in and win," responded Horace. "Gwendolyn is not a bad-looking girl, if you like them large. I don't much myself. I like a girl about five feet five, but Gwendolyn must be pretty near six."

"That don't matter, Bo, if she's got the stuff. Can you give me an introduction?"

"Not very well until she finishes her present novel. She doesn't see anybody while she is at work. I don't exactly see how you got in. She generally has the gates guarded."

"Why, one of the dashed looneys was hollering at me after I got out, but I didn't stop. How long will it take to finish her book?"

"Here's Mrs. Wilmot's," said the attorney, opening the gate. "They are all sitting on the front gallery. She generally writes a story in about three months," he continued, as they went up the walk, "and she's been working on this nearly two. If you are really in earnest, though, I'd advise you to read her other stories while you are waiting. That's the first question she asks strangers, and you wouldn't have much chance if you hadn't. This is Mr. Cobbs, Mrs. Wilmot, Miss Wilmot, Mrs. Medlock. Mr. Cobbs is look-

ing for a temporary abiding place in the wilderness, Mrs. Wilmot, and I suggested that he come to see you about it. Or, in other words, Mrs. Wilmot, he wants board."

"I have no vacant room, Mr. Cobbs," said Mrs. Wilmot, smiling. She was a small woman with a sweet voice and a pleasant face, although her countenance displayed much patient weariness. The brown hair upon her head was just beginning to be sprinkled with gray.

"Mr. Cobbs will rent the room over his store for a lodging," Horace explained. "You know I told you this morning that he had bought out Mrs. Trescott. He only desires to partake of your good things three times per day, Mrs. Wilmot. I told him your terms, and that your table was the best in the United States, and he is exceedingly happy thereat."

"Thank you, Mr. Layton," said Mrs. Wilmot. "I shall be very glad to have Mr. Cobbs. I was just going to see about tea when you came in," she continued, rising. "You will stay to-night, I suppose, Mr. Cobbs? It will be ready in about half an hour."

"Thank you, ma'am," John replied. "I've got some business with a fellow downtown, and I'll get supper at the hotel. I'll begin at breakfast to-morrow."

"Breakfast is at eight o'clock," she said. "Well, good-evening. I will see you to-morrow, then."

While this conversation was in progress Mrs. Medlock was listening with barely concealed impatience. She was one of those buxom matrons who naturally consider all talk uninteresting which they do not do themselves. As she was polite she, of course, would not interrupt Mrs. Wilmot's business colloquy, but as soon as that lady retired she ranged alongside and opened fire with all her guns at once.

"I am real sorry to hear that you are not engaging board

for two, Mr. Cobbs," she said; "but that is a fault which can be easily remedied. We have so many nice girls in Judithland. I don't believe that there is a town of this size anywhere in the country which has so many sweet, pretty girls in proportion to the population. I will take pleasure in taking you to call on some of them any time you wish."

"Now, Mrs. Medlock," said Horace Layton, quizzically, "you mustn't be always drumming up business. Doesn't your conscience ever worry you on account of all these men you've gotten into trouble for life, just because you get the wedding fees?"

"An old bachelor like you needn't talk, Mr. Layton," returned Mrs. Medlock, smiling. "What do you know about it, anyhow? They tell me you've been trying to get married for the past thirty years, and no girl will have you. You think you have got Miss Rosamond cornered, but I know she will get out of it somehow. And just because you can't get married, you are always trying to make fun of other people who do. A man is never thoroughly happy until he is married. I know Mr. Medlock has been very much happier since I finally consented to marry him."

"We haven't heard from Mr. Medlock on that subject yet," said Horace. "I am not going to ask him anything about it when you are around, though, Mrs. Medlock. I'm going to get him off sometime and cross-examine him in private. I shall really enjoy finding out all the facts in the case."

"Well, you won't find out anything different from what I say. I've got Mr. Medlock entirely too well trained to talk any differently when I am away than when I am present. And he feels that way, anyhow."

"Why, really," replied Horace, smiling, "we hardly ever hear anything at all from your husband when you are

present. Except his sermons on Sunday, occasionally, I hardly ever hear the sound of his voice. And, say, Mrs. Medlock, are you absolutely certain that you did not propose to him? I don't see how he got a chance, if he did it."

"I didn't, Mr. Layton, I didn't," she responded, with spirit. "I kept him hanging on as long as Miss Columba has her sweethearts. I could prove it by his letters, but I lost them all when the parsonage burned. It was years and years before I finally consented to marry him."

"It is too bad that you lost your letters," said Horace, sympathetically. "Maybe he could write you some more, if he hasn't forgotten how. Speaking of Miss Columba, you would have been amused this afternoon, Mrs. Medlock, if you could have seen her two beaux. I had them playing chess to see which should come up here this evening. You know Dave blushes as much as Miss Columba is doing right now. He's somewhat shy, but he'll get over that, and he is much the nicer man of the two, and the best catch into the bargain. I don't see why Miss Columba doesn't think so, but she doesn't."

"I am not blushing, Mr. Layton," said Columba Wilmot, indignantly, while the danger signals glowed upon her cheeks. "I am not blushing at all. You know very well David doesn't care anything for me. He has not been here for a long time."

"I know he hasn't," said Horace. "It's been over a week. I told him Jim Houston was cutting him out, but he only looked embarrassed and didn't say anything."

"Dr. Houston is really in love with Miss Columba," said Mrs. Medlock, judicially, "but Mr. Elmore is not. When Mr. Medlock was trying to persuade me to marry him he came every night for more than two years. There were three or four other men about that time, and they used to sit each other out until one or two o'clock. One night one

of them said good-night about twelve, and left Mr. Medlock and myself in the parlor and slipped into the dining-room, thinking he would come out after Mr. Medlock left; and for fear that we might come in there and make a light for something or other, he crawled under the table. But he went to sleep in the dark under there, and about half-past twelve, when Mr. Medlock had gone, I put out the lights and went upstairs, and he slept until the house servant came at six the next morning. Goodness gracious, but she was scared. The whole town was laughing at him, and he never came again. Who knows what might have happened if he hadn't gone to sleep," she continued, meditatively.

Here John Cobbs arose to take leave. While he was not very loquacious, except on business topics, and was willing enough to listen to his friends talk about his affairs, yet he did not consider other people's interests of sufficient consequence to occupy his time if he could reasonably avoid it.

Columba Wilmot and Horace Layton arose also.

"I am sorry that you will not stay to tea, Mr. Cobbs," said Miss Columba. "But I suppose we will see you in the morning."

"Sure," returned John. "I'll be on time. Can't afford to be late at breakfast. I need it in my business. Good-night."

"Good-night," they returned, and John walked off down the street.

While Mrs. Medlock continued her conversation with Horace, and Miss Columba went into the house to assist her mother in preparing tea, I presume that a few words descriptive of the young lady will be expected.

To tell you the truth, I am not much in favor of describing the appearance of characters in novels. A printed

inventory of a person's looks, as the Countess Olivia stated her features in "Twelfth Night," seems so cold and dead; and, besides, it is somewhat rude to insinuate that readers have not enough imagination to fit physical qualities to the people in the story.

But, on the other hand, when the actors come on the stage you almost always see them before you hear them speak, and therefore I am willing to give you a brief summary of Miss Columba's most salient points as a foundation for the exercise of your own fancy, especially because she frequently appears during the progress of the story.

She was about the height which Horace Layton said he preferred and very slender, to use an elegant adjective. She had inherited a quantity of light brown hair from her mother, which, by frequent washing, she kept in excellent condition. Her skin was fair, but with a slight tendency to freckle, and this annoyed her greatly and caused her to avoid the sun as far as possible. The expression on her countenance showed weakness and indecision, for, sad to relate, she was one of those fool women who positively enjoy being ill.

There, now; I have used an extremely impolite expression in referring to a young lady. I hope I may be forgiven, and really it is not my custom to talk so; but when I think of the number of women who keep their husbands or their fathers toiling to pay their doctors' bills, whose houses are unkept, and whose children, poor things, have to raise themselves, and all because their mothers are lazy and vain and absolutely defy every law of hygiene, it makes me too indignant to talk sweetly.

Any sane person ought to know that if you never use the muscles God has given you they will become useless and ache. An unused steam engine will rust. If you stay in a hot, tight room and never breathe the pure air of

heaven your lungs will become diseased. They are made for air, and not for poison. If you stuff yourself with indigestible food you will have dyspepsia. If you put too much coal on the grate the fire goes out. I have known young women to eat immoderately of Welsh rarebit at one o'clock in the morning and then dose themselves with pepsin. Bah! How thoroughly disgusting that is!

If you like to have a doctor and have someone who is able to pay for his services, you may be absolutely certain that the doctor will stay with you. Can you blame him, poor man? He may have a wife and ten children to support, and how can you expect him to order a fine lady to get up and walk when she thoroughly enjoys living on a sofa and drinking poison which he is regularly paid to administer? It is not human nature to expect him to do anything else.

However, I am doing Miss Columba a slight injustice. I said she enjoyed being ill, which she did; and if her father had been in prosperous circumstances she would doubtless have appropriated the sofa and the daily doctor.

But owing to her father's paralytic stroke and the difficulty which her mother experienced in making her receipts equal her disbursements, Columba was compelled to assist somewhat in the boarding-house keeping, and lacked both the time and the money to be a confirmed invalid. Thus she had to confine herself generally to feeling unwell, with the occasional luxury of a spell in bed, with Dr. Chester in attendance.

I do not think that she was naturally a bad-tempered person. Indeed, she frequently assisted her mother and waited on her father very sweetly. But her supposed ill-health occasionally showed itself in her conduct, and people do not generally blame sick people for being cross.

John Cobbs had an important object in view in refusing

to remain for tea at Mrs. Wilmot's. While beer is well enough in its way and is not a bad tipple to take between drinks, yet it does not take the place of the real thing, and his entire being persistently clamored for the beverage which his pocket flask could not supply.

He knew that Elm Street was just back of his store, and he walked rapidly in that direction.

He found that it was more like an alley than a street and that it was lined on either side by negro tenements. These tenements were mostly two-room cabins, destitute of paint, old and rotting. The broken windows and the dilapidated roofs apparently supplied abundance of air and water, while the inmates themselves furnished the dirt, and the lacking element, fire, was indicated by a faint smoke which curled lazily up from certain time-worn chimneys. The gaps in the fences allowed a ready egress to the swarms of dogs and children, who barked and stared at John as he approached from a safe distance.

There were no sidewalks, and the recent rain had converted the street into a mass of sticky mud, through which John found great difficulty in picking his way. Fortunately he had to go but little more than a square before he came to a sign which informed the public in irregular capitals of the following fact:

"BUTES AN SHUS MEN DED HEARE BYE JONH JONHSIN."

A stalwart man, black as a witch's cat, was sitting in a chair on the gallery of a cabin as badly decayed as its fellows, but which possessed the glory of three rooms. He scrutinized John Cobbs narrowly as he slowly approached.

"Say, Man," said John, "got any molasses?"

Apparently satisfied from the color of John's face that he was all right and a desirable customer, the man answered promptly:

"Yes, sah. Has you got a bottle?"

After John had produced his flask he continued:

"Go in de shop, knock t'ree times, go in de nex' doah, put de bottle and de dollah in de box, knock twicet, and wait."

John did as he was bid. The rooms were both small and filthy. The first was ostensibly a cobbler's shop, and a miscellaneous collection of tools, lasts, and more or less worn shoes was scattered around the floor.

Now, to John's careless glance, in the obscurity, it was merely the working place of a humble shoe repairer; and if he had thought anything about it he certainly would have supposed it in constant use. But the eagle eye of the novelist sees a coating of thick dust upon the bench where the cobbler ought to sit. It sees the rust which has gathered on the awls, the lack of edge on the tarnished knives, and the mildew on the way-worn shoes. All of these circumstances bear conclusive evidence to the fact that the owner of the establishment lives in some other way than upon the produce of his daily toil.

And what a blessing it is that the story-teller's eyes are more penetrating than those of his characters and his prescience more acute! If the reader believed, as Lady Geraldine was persuaded by that villainous Lord Cutthroat to believe, that Sir Robert was a scoundrel who had two wives already, the reader would chuck the volume into the fire and never reach that glorious final chapter where the noble Sir Robert forces the villain to confess that he lied; and, after cutting the throat of Lord Cutthroat, marries the heroine and takes her to live happily in his castle in Spain.

What wonderful detectives writers of fiction are, to be sure! How tangled they do get us in a maze of contradictory evidence and then straighten out everything by one

touch of their magic wands! But you know the proverb, "Those who hide can find"; and, although we are also told that a man who sets a trap is apt to fall therein, yet I personally prefer to take my chances with ten traps of my own setting rather than with one of some other fellow's.

John Cobbs knocked three times on the inner door, as he was directed, and after a faint scuffling had subsided, he opened it and entered into a negro's bedroom. I could easily describe this room, but I do not care to, because dirt and darkeys combined produce an odor which is not pleasing to sensitive nostrils, and I prefer to get my refined friends out of it as soon as possible.

John was not so particular, and he had been in many similar dens of blind tigers heretofore. He soon perceived a cracker box which was let into a hole in the wall on the other side of the room, and above which the hinged lid was hanging by a cord. Placing his bottle with a dollar in the box, he gave the necessary signal, whereupon the lid dropped suddenly. It was raised again after a few minutes, when he found that the dollar had vanished and the flask had been filled with a ruby-colored fluid, a portion of which he immediately swallowed. It was truly poor stuff, but it was whisky, and John had imbibed too much mean liquor during his life to be very fastidious.

On his road to the hotel he obtained a book from his store, and after supper he spent the evening in drinking whisky and water and in trying to read a volume of the works of Gwendolyn Rowena Montmorency.

## CHAPTER V.

### DAVID ELMORE.

OF all the unfortunate beings whom the waves of eternity have cast upon the shores of time, the bashful man is the most unhappy. And I believe that this is due to the fact that his misery is internal and is not caused by extraneous circumstances.

A woman who is shy is also to be pitied. But in our present state of society the female sex is not expected to be as self-assertive as the male, and therefore a maiden may conceal her timidity much more easily than a youth. A certain amount of it, termed modesty, is even very becoming to her.

Bashfulness is caused by an intense distrust of one's own power to do or to say the proper thing in the correct manner. And yet a man may be diffident and at the same time know in the depth of his soul that he possesses social qualities superior to those of other men with whom he associates.

But, after he has framed a pretty speech which is suited to the occasion, if he attempts to give it utterance in his hesitating voice, some other man, in loud tones, will interrupt his conversational harmony with a jangling discord of foolishness, to which, of course, the woman pays attention. For women, as a rule, admire success already achieved, and prefer the plated jewelry which glitters to the dull gold in its rough quartz prison. And thus our

bashful friend is left in silence, while he sees an ignorant man, with no refinement, carry off the honors of the conversation.

David Elmore was born shy. One of his earliest recollections of childhood was of a little boy, with long curls, climbing a pear tree to escape from two tiny girls who had come to visit him. He could indistinctly remember how he felt upon that occasion; and that, mingled with the timidity which induced him to fly from his company, there was an infusion of pride in his ability to climb so large a tree and a desire to display his contempt of danger in the sight of the ladies.

He had been sickly as a boy and far from strong, and his father had employed teachers to instruct him at home, so that he had never been to school. His father's business was prosperous, and he was an only child, and he had received the benefit of every advantage which a country town could furnish, although Colonel Elmore did not think it necessary to send him to college.

But the weakness of his body had caused him to be the constant subject of persecution by other lads. He never went upon the street without being kicked and cuffed by every boy who met him who was not much smaller than himself. It was not exactly cowardice which kept him from resistance, but it was the knowledge of his physical debility, and many a time he had gone several squares out of his way to avoid an encounter with an approaching male of his own size.

Natural science teaches us that the young of every creature display the characteristics of their remote ancestors. And, knowing this fact, no one can watch a group of schoolboys at their play and doubt for one instant of our descent from a race of howling savages. It is as natural for the small boy to abuse, and possibly destroy, the weak

and unprotected as it is for the small girl to follow the instincts of her being and nurse a doll.

Sometimes we see a vigorous boy who is nearing his teens champion the cause of a weak fellow against a stronger lad. But I am sure that he does it more from a lust of combat than from any, except a very rudimentary notion of succoring the oppressed.

And, really, our so-called civilization is entirely superficial, and at bottom the majority of the world is composed of worse savages than those from whom we are descended. For the suave language of diplomacy is only for the benefit of nations of equal or superior power, and the mailed fist enforces any claim, however unjust, against an inferior people.

Thus to the brutality of our forefathers we have added the contemptible sin of hypocrisy, and the rulers of the earth claim to follow in the footsteps of the meek and lowly Jesus, while they are as arrogant and as proud as Beelzebub and cynically destroy their fellow creatures by the tens of thousands solely for the purpose of spoliation.

I heard a small darkey once give utterance to a sentiment that expresses the rule which has always governed man's dealings with man very exactly.

"Yes, sah," he said. "Yes, sah. I ain't feared to hit no nigger what's littler dan me."

Now, my reader, if you are the proud father of a family of sturdy boys, do not blame them at all if they return from school with blackened eyes or bruised faces. It is a sign that they have been defending themselves against superior forces, or waging war against equals, which is a commendable conformity to their natural instincts.

When you find, however, that one of them had been bullying a smaller boy you may reprimand him if your own conscience is clear.

Did you never in business crush a weaker competitor to the wall? Did you never bull or bear the market to enlarge your own bank account and wipe out hundreds of others? Have you never employed your superior intellect to get the best of your neighbor in a horse trade or a real estate deal?

If you have never done these or similar things you may consistently correct your son for his natural instincts, but if you yield to the same influences yourself "remove first the beam which is in thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to extract the mote which is in the eye of thy son."

And so David's principal playmates in his childhood were small girls, who were mostly younger than himself. Probably owing to his physical weakness he never felt any desire to impose upon them, and he generally adapted himself to their amusements and played with dolls.

Oh, those happy days of childhood that grown people talk so much about and children never experience. What short memories most people have! If the cotton market goes against us and we are deprived of a large part of our previous gains, we can generally console ourselves by remembering former losses from which we recovered, and we go on our way with the calm hope of robbing some other gambler to make ourselves whole again. But if a stronger lad takes from us our only top, the foundation of our belief in the private ownership of property is destroyed, and we are apt to sink into despair at the thought that we will never more own a darling top. And, although we may speedily forget our trouble, yet happy childhood is filled with similar painful circumstances.

Columba Wilmot had been one of David's most particular friends. Before her father became an invalid, he earned a good salary as general manager of the cotton

compress and rented a house next door to the home of Colonel Elmore.

David and Columba had spent part of every day together, until she was sent to boarding-school about the time that he commenced work as runner in his father's bank.

David's health had become thoroughly established since he had arrived at maturity, and by a persistent course of physical exercise he had gradually attained the ordinary strength of manhood.

Associated in business with men in the bank, where at the age of twenty-two he had worked up to the position of teller, and having forced himself during four years to spend most of his spare time in society, he was slowly overcoming his bashfulness. He possessed a quick wit and abundance of good sense, and when alone with a girl who was willing to discuss intellectual topics he was able to take a fair share in the conversation. But in a crowd of young people, where the everlasting flow of nonsense was in circulation, his confidence generally deserted him, and he sat in silence or only answered in monosyllables.

Men as a rule did not like him much, because he preferred the society of women and cared little for their amusements and conversation.

Mr. Wilmot's sudden stroke of paralysis put an end to Columba's education before she had been one year at college. Soon afterwards her mother had rented a larger residence near the business portion of the town and had opened a boarding-house, where we found her in a preceding chapter.

It was several months after Columba's final return from school before David first realized that he loved her. The first taps of Love upon the doors of our hearts are very faint, and the little rogue frequently steals in and takes

possession before we have any knowledge that he is in our neighborhood.

A foolish sense of pride, perhaps joined to David's natural diffidence, prevented him from confessing the truth to her at once and entreating her promise to marry him. His salary at that time, however, was not sufficient to support a wife; he would not request his father's assistance, and he was ashamed to ask her to wait for him.

Here David showed the natural effect of his lack of egotism. If he had been like most men he would have considered that she was honored by his preference, and that she would only be too glad to engage herself to him for any length of time.

But he was very much in love with Columba and not at all in love with himself; and, therefore, he could see no reason why she should wish to marry him; and he determined not to ask her until he could earn enough to support her in reasonable comfort.

David tried, during the three years before the commencement of our story, to remain on the old terms of intimacy with his sweetheart; but somehow he had only indifferent success. If he went to her home too frequently he found that she was suddenly taken ill, or she was tired and could not see him. When they were children together, if she needed any help to repair a broken doll or to find a lost toy, it was David to whom she naturally applied. But now when she required assistance she asked any of her friends except him.

Her conduct troubled him continually. Occasionally, when he would see her, she would be lively and kind and they would part the best of friends; and she would pass him on the street the next day with a cold stare and a faint nod, as if she was uncertain whether or not she was acquainted with him.

Two years before our tale begins, James Houston returned from a medical school a full-fledged M. D., and at once commenced to practice his profession and to procure himself a wife. It is necessary for a doctor to be married, and as he had inherited sufficient money to live upon for a few years longer and possessed an absolute determination to succeed, he had no fears for the future.

He soon commenced a vigorous courtship of Columba Wilmot, and David speedily had the pleasure of hearing their engagement unofficially announced. But as time went by his success appeared to be little better than David's. For a month or two he would spend every evening at Mrs. Wilmot's, and David would find him there, if he came, and leave him there when he went. If David asked her to go out with him she always had an engagement with Dr. Houston, and their friends in town were absolutely certain that they were soon to be married. Then suddenly his visits would cease, and for several months he would be seen no more at the young lady's home, and after people had entirely stopped talking about the couple he would recommence his attentions in the same manner.

Thus matters stood on that July day when John Cobbs came to Judithland, soon after David had been advanced to the position of teller in his father's bank.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MOONLIGHT PICNIC.

THERE was to be a grand moonlight picnic for the benefit of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The Episcopalians were not very strong in Judithland. They had only recently built a small church, and they were having considerable trouble in raising funds to make the first payment upon their debt.

As a rule, this denomination does not prosper in the country or in small towns. Well-to-do, fashionable people, together with those who desire to be thought so, and who do not meddle too much with religion, form the bulk of its parishioners, which class does not largely exist outside of the cities.

Colonel Elmore was senior warden of the church, and David had learned that the picnic was to be given the morning that it was decided upon, and he had at once telephoned to ask Columba Wilmot if she would go with him, which she readily consented to do. Believing that his salary was now sufficient to support a wife without assistance from his father, he had fully made up his mind to ask her to marry him, and he thought there could be no better occasion for the momentous question than this.

If any environment could produce the effect of softening a woman's heart, a moonlight picnic certainly should. When the tiny moonbeams creep softly through the leafy portals of the grove and faintly touch the shadows with

their golden radiance; while their fair mother sits enthroned among the circumambient clouds and smiles upon a lover's vows, and from afar soft music is gently wafted upon the cooling breeze to form a dulcet accompaniment to his whispered pleadings, then, if ever, must a maiden yield heart and hand to the enamored swain who is glorified by his surroundings.

There is no extra charge for this. It is all included in the price of the story. I throw it off merely to show what I could do if I tried, and you may thank your stars, fortunate reader, that I do not try very often. I am willing to admit that it is hard on the intelligent compositor, but that long-suffering individual appears to get the worst of it at all times. Just think of having not only to read but to put in type every word of one of our modern novels without the darling privilege of skipping. On the other hand, though, he gets paid for doing what we pay to be allowed to do, so I suppose it is about even all around.

Another advantage which the moonlight picnic possesses over the day article is that the semi-obscurity assists in concealing blemishes. The said loving couple may gracefully recline upon a grassy bank in the darkness in blissful ignorance of the facts that grass grows thinly under trees; that rain and earth will produce mud, and that mud does not combine to any artistic advantage with white duck trousers or lawn skirts. However, there are always washtubs to be had the next day.

The picnic was to be held at Gaylor's grove, on the Midland Railroad, some five miles from Judithland, the evening of John Cobbs' first day at Mrs. Wilmot's boarding-house.

David dressed himself with unusual care that evening, and about half an hour before the train was to leave he strolled slowly to Columba's home. To an outside ob-

server he appeared to be sufficiently self-possessed, but the novelist looks upon the heart, and between you and me, fair reader, I think he was scared. But why he should be frightened I cannot say. He was going to ask the woman he loved a question which every maiden likes to hear. It may have been fear of failure which produced this feeling, but I think that it was merely the effect of his unconquerable shyness.

Mrs. Wilmot met him at the front door.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Wilmot," he said. "Is Miss Columba at home?"

"Why, no, David," she responded, in a slightly astonished tone of voice. "She went with Dr. Houston to take tea with his mother, and they are going to the picnic afterwards. They have been gone more than an hour. I am surprised that you are not going, David. I thought you went everywhere. Won't you come in? There's no one here but Mr. Wilmot and myself."

If Mrs. Wilmot had been an observant person she would have been much more surprised at the effect which her words produced on David's countenance as he made his embarrassed excuses and turned to walk away. But, like most middle-aged people, she paid little attention to young folks' looks, and this evening, as her boarders had almost all gone to the picnic, she was occupied with her housekeeping accounts, which had an unaccountable way of refusing to balance.

David's soul was in a turmoil. He was angry with Columba for her rudeness and angry with himself for loving a woman who could treat him with so little consideration. His first impulse was to go home and stay there. But he speedily reflected that if he did he would have to explain to his parents the next day the reason why he remained away, which he felt he could not do.

Then his pride came to his rescue, and he resolved to go to the picnic and show his faithless sweetheart that there were other women in the world, and that he could care as little for her as she for him.

And by a great piece of that good luck which usually attends characters in novels, just as David had come to this resolution he saw Mamye Clay standing at her front gate, evidently waiting for someone, and he crossed the street to speak to her.

"Good-evening, Miss Mamye," he said. "Are you not going to the picnic?"

"Why, yes, Davy," she returned. "I'm going with the Browns. I'm just waiting for them now. Stop awhile and talk. Ain't you going?"

"Come go with me, Miss Mamye, if you don't mind my not asking you before. I wanted to ask you last week, but I thought I would have to leave town on business, and I just got out of it this afternoon."

There are some circumstances in social life where a little white lie, if not entirely justifiable, is at least very convenient.

"Of course I'll go with you, Davy. Oh, Ma!" she cried to her mother on the porch, "I'm going with Dave. Please tell Mrs. Brown. Come on, Davy. I'm afraid we'll be too late!"

"Oh, there is plenty of time, Miss Mamye, plenty of time. It lacks twenty minutes yet of train time, and they are almost certain to be late."

When they turned a corner of the railroad station they came suddenly face to face with Columba Wilmot and Dr. Houston. Columba flushed scarlet, although her color was not very perceptible in the growing dusk. She turned to one side immediately, as if to pass them without speaking, but Mamye Clay stopped her.

"Well, C'lumby," she said, "I caught one of your beaus, if you did get the other. You can't hold on to both of the nicest men in town all of the time."

Columba's voice trembled when she answered. Strange as it may seem, although she had deliberately broken her engagement with David, she was yet angry and hurt that he should console himself. And yet it is not strange that a woman should do unaccountable things. The combined wisdom of all the male world cannot predict what one simple girl will do under any given circumstances.

"He didn't ask you very long ago," she said.

"Why, he did, he did. He asked me more than a week ago, right after the picnic was advertised, didn't you, Davy?" Mamye continued, turning to David.

David had made up his mind that, if he met Columba, he would act as if nothing had happened, in order to show her that her rudeness was of no consequence to him. But, coming suddenly upon her with Dr. Houston as he had, he could only stammer out a kind of an assent; which, however, was unnecessary, for Columba and her escort did not pause to await his answer.

When the party reached the grove David devoted himself assiduously to Mamye Clay. They danced together in the pavilion until they were tired; and, after testing the merits of the ices served by the ladies of the church, they wandered off to a bench in a dark place under some trees.

"Davy," she said, "why ain't you been to see me?"

"Why, Miss Mamye," he replied, "I hardly ever go anywhere. I haven't been away from home for two weeks."

"Now, Davy, it ain't any use in telling me stories. You know you are always hanging 'round C'lumby. And it won't do you no good, either, 'cause she's going to marry Jim Houston next month."

David tried to overcome the tremor in his voice as he replied, but he was not very successful.

"So I have heard. But I hardly ever go there."

"You do, Davy, you do. You are there all the time. What's the use in wasting your time on an engaged girl when you might go to see a girl that really likes you? C'lumby Wilmot's a mean, cross thing, anyway, and I don't see why Jim Houston wants to marry her. But he does, and it's going to come off next month, and they're going to live with his mother. Mrs. Medlock told me all about it, and she's living right in the house with her. You ought to come to see me, Davy. Come and take tea with me next Sunday, won't you? It ain't any use going to C'lumby's."

"Why—I—yes, I'll come. I'm not going to Miss Columba's any more at all."

"That's right, Davy. It ain't no use. You never will get a girl to marry you if you keep on hanging 'round an engaged girl. I could 've told you that two months ago."

David was naturally anxious to change the topic of the conversation. It is not a source of enjoyment for any man to hear the success of his rival announced, and it was particularly displeasing to David, because he thoroughly believed it to be true.

But, really, when he was with Miss Mamye he hardly knew what to talk about. It is not easy for an intelligent young man, who is somewhat shy, to converse with a girl who spells her name with a "y." He thought of the books he had been reading, but he knew that her taste in that line did not extend beyond Laura Jean Libby, or her namesake, to whom she proudly claimed to be related, and he had never perused any of the effusions of these two gifted authoresses. He was taking considerable interest in the South African negotiations, which were approaching an

acute stage at that time, and which many people predicted could only find their solution in war; but what did Mamye know or care about foreign affairs? So David fell back upon the last resource of the weak conversationalist.

"Isn't it a beautiful evening," he said. "Don't you think that the moonlight effects are exquisite in the country?"

"Yes," returned Mamye, "and ain't it nice and dark out here? A feller could put his arm plum 'round a girl's waist and nobody'd never know the difference."

What did David do, you ask? Why, he did not do anything. Indeed, it was not a very long time before he and Miss Mamye went back to the pavilion.

"I say, Bo," said John Cobbs, seating himself beside Horace Layton, who was watching Rosamond Lattimer in her attempts to dance with a young countryman whose education in that line had been sadly neglected, "what's a kew-ass?"

"A kew-ass? What do you mean?"

"And what's a grave? I don't mean a hole in the ground, but something a fellow wears. And what's a salad, and a buckler, and an Odd's blood, and a zounds, and a ke-night? I'm dashed if I know, and there's mighty few things that are worth knowing that I don't."

"Why, bless my boots, Man, where did you get those words?"

"I tried to read one of that Gwendolyn's books last night, and I'll be dashed if I didn't go to sleep twenty times. I don't see how any fellow can waste time reading books."

"Don't let Gwendolyn hear you say that, or your name will be mud."

"You think I'm a fool, Bo? Not on your life. If people are fools enough to pay her big money for doing it, it don't

hurt me none, I reckon. But, I say, Bo, ain't there no way I can get in her house sooner than you said yesterday? I can't wait a whole month, dashed if I can. If I do a thing, I want to do it right off."

"You can't go unless you storm her castle and carry her off. I never went to her house but once when she was writing a book, and then she made me dress like an old monk and shave my mustache, blessed if she didn't," and Horace Layton twirled his brown mustache in an affectionate manner.

"Well, can't I, what you say, storm her castle? How do you do it? Dashed if I can't do anything any other fellow can."

The lawyer's eyes began to twinkle in the light of the oil lamps, as he saw the prospect of some fun.

"Well, I reckon you can," he said, "if you don't mind dressing the part. And I don't know any better way for you to get Gwendolyn, either. I think she would come down easy if she could have a real historical romance in her own life. You see, she has always had to get her love scenes out of other people's books, as she has never had a case herself, and I don't think she likes it. But you must read her books."

"Oh, I can't, Bo. Dashed if I can. I don't understand half the words. And, I say," John continued, "can't you help me out on it, and I'll pay you a commission on what she's worth? A small commission," he corrected, in a slightly apprehensive tone of voice.

"I will help you for nothing," said the attorney, laughing. "I shall be glad to help Gwendolyn to a good husband."

"Well, then, tell me what to do. Dashed if I know. What's a ke-night?"

"Don't you know what a knight is?"

"Know what night is! Well, I should say I did. I've played poker till morning too dashed many times not to know what a night is; and I've had some rattling good ones, too. But what's a ke-night?"

"Why, a ke-night, as you call it, was one of those old-time fellows Gwendolyn writes about. You see, they bummed 'round after dark so much, taking chops at dragons and other ke-nights, that they always carried latch-keys to get in when they got home, and finally they got to calling them key-nights, which is the poetic way of saying night-key."

Horace Layton's face assumed an expression of preternatural gravity, and his voice acquired a tone of great seriousness.

"I never ate any dragon chops," said John Cobbs, "but I reckon they're all right. You think she won't mind my having a latch-key? It's all right, but I'd have it anyhow, whether she liked it or not. And what's a kew-ass, Bo?"

"Why, a cuirass was a kind of donkey that the knights rode on. You see, they found out by experience that horses got frightened at the noise their armor made when it rattled, and invariably ran away and pitched them off, and so they adopted the donkeys. Every knight carried a big bunch of greens on his back which they called the salade, and when the fight began he pitched it down in front of his donkey, and you couldn't budge that animal until they got through. If you want to carry off Gwendolyn, I know where you can get a good donkey."

"Carry her off, Bo? How do you mean?"

"Why, that was the way the knights always got their wives? You want to dress up in costume some morning, rush into her yard, knock down her men, and pick her up and carry her off to town. I think she would be charmed to death."

"Carry her into town? Why, Bo, she must weigh nearly two hundred pounds."

"Oh, you only have to lift her on the donkey and you ride in front of her yourself," said the lawyer, as he rose to his feet when the music ceased. "I've got an engagement with Miss Rosamond and must get you to excuse me, Mr. Cobbs. I will see you about it to-morrow and help you with the costume."

"But tell me what an ess-quire is before you go, Bo. Dashed if I know anything about it."

"Why, an esquire was a small nigger each knight had to drive his donkey," replied Horace, as he paused and half turned before he started away. "They called them that because they always sang in chorus while the knights were fighting."

As soon as Horace reached the side of Rosamond Lattimer, her countryman bowed clumsily and departed in silence.

"I think he must be a graduate from the deaf and dumb institute," said Rosamond, as she watched his awkward progress across the pavilion. "Now, Horace, why didn't you come to rescue me from him before? He nearly tramped my feet to pieces," she continued, as they turned their steps in the direction of an empty bench which was located invitingly in a dusky nook under the trees.

"My dear, sweet girl," he said, "you know that I only live to hear your charming voice and see your beautiful face and graceful form. I would walk all 'round the world on my knees merely to see the print of your tiny foot. But that young man has a great deal of influence in politics, even if he don't talk to suit you; and what chance do you think I would have to carry his district if I cut him out from his dance with the nicest girl in all the world?"

She smilingly forgave him. There are some speeches

that the most skeptical of women will readily believe, even if they know the man who utters them is never in earnest.

"And, Rosy, dear," he continued, "I've got the best joke you ever heard of. You saw that red-headed man I was talking to, didn't you? That was John Cobbs, who has bought out Trescott's bookstore. He has got an idea into his head that he will try to marry Gwendolyn, and I am going to help him dress up like a knight to carry her off. The best part of it is that he don't begin to understand the first principles of what a knight was, and I have been imposing on him until I am really ashamed of myself. I want to get you to help me fix up a costume for him. We will have a whole lot of fun out of it."

When the third couple with whom we are at present interesting ourselves reached the grove, Columba Wilmot located herself upon a bench in the shadow near the pavilion and remained there. She declined Dr. Houston's invitation to dance; she refused all refreshments, and she answered his conversational attempts in monosyllables. But when David Elmore returned to the pavilion with Mamye Clay, and leaving her to dance with another man, wandered off in an aimless way, Columba rose to her feet and insisted upon her escort taking her for a walk through the woods.

After strolling for some time in silence they sat down on a bank, and she suddenly broke in upon the stillness of the grove.

"Why don't you say something, Dr. Houston?" she said, pettishly. "I hate to see a man walk along like a block of wood and never open his mouth."

"You know, Miss Columba," he replied, in a soft, low tone, "that there is only one subject which I can think about when I am with you, and you seemed to be so quiet this evening that I did not like to mention it."

"You had better talk about that than nothing. And yet I am sick and tired of hearing about it, too. I never intend to marry you, and I don't see why you don't stop asking me."

"You will some day," he returned, confidently, "and I am willing to wait. I would wait for you for a thousand years."

"Isn't it 'most train time?" she said. "It seems to me very late."

He struck a match and glanced at his watch for an instant, before a puff of the rising wind put out the light.

"It is only eleven o'clock," he said, "and the train does not leave until eleven-thirty."

"But the band has stopped playing," she replied. "Are you sure that we were not to return until halfpast eleven?"

"I think they must be giving the band their supper. They always give them some refreshments."

They talked in a desultory fashion for some minutes longer, when the distant rumbling of a train attracted their attention.

"Dr. Houston, isn't that our train?" she asked, nervously.

"I think it must be just coming for us, Miss Columba. We might walk over to the pavilion and wait there."

But when they reached the pavilion it was silent and deserted. There is something peculiarly depressing about a place of amusement after the gay throng of pleasure-seekers has departed. It may be that the ghosts of dead joys mourn their lost existence and frighten the chance wayfarer. It may be only the solitude contrasted with the assembly. But it is certain that an unused picnic-ground in the moonlight is more disheartening even than a theater in the morning.

Columba realized this feeling as she cried:

"Dr. Houston, they've gone and left us. What shall I do? I told you that was our train."

"They must have gone ahead of time. It can't be more than eleven-fifteen."

He looked at his watch again in the moonlight; but alas! watches, like men, are fallible. The perfidious hands still pointed to eleven o'clock. It had stopped.

What should they do? Are you in doubt, fair reader? Well, Dr. Houston was not. You do not know him very well if you think he could hesitate for a moment in deciding such a question.

"The next train to town passes here about seven-thirty," he said. "It's a local and stops here when flagged. I will take you over to Dan Bowman's house and you can spend the night there. It is only about three hundred yards. I know him and his wife very well. I attended their daughter last spring when she had pneumonia."

"But my mother? She always sits up for me, and she will be frightened to death when the others come without me."

"There's a telephone at a house a little way up the road, and after I take you to Mrs. Bowman's I will go there and telephone to her. I will get her before the train comes in."

Middle-aged, portly reader, whose sons and daughters are growing up around you, how many fibs did you tell your wife before you married her? You need not begin to bristle up and indignantly deny, because I know what you did better than you know yourself. You think that a young man is a fool because he uses every possible means to win the woman he loves; and yet you did the same thing when you were younger and have forgotten.

There was no telephone in the neighborhood and Bowman's only horse was sick. Dr. Houston thought riding a mule a worse punishment than walking; and so, after leav-

ing Columba with Mrs. Bowman, he counted crossties for five long miles to Judithland and relieved the anxiety of his sweetheart's mother soon after one o'clock. After trying to sleep for a couple of hours, and making an unprofessionably poor job of it, about half-past four he roused up his stableman and promptly appeared at the six-thirty breakfast at Bowman's house with a bunch of dew-spangled roses, which by great good luck he had obtained from their early-rising local florist.

The breakfast was quite good, and Columba was in a better humor, which reacted on her lover. She made no inquiries as to where he had passed the night or obtained her flowers, and they took the morning train for town. He left his horse and buggy to be sent in later, and allowed her to learn of his night's work after she reached her home. A man spoils all his thoughtfulness if he brags about it.

It must be confessed that Dr. Houston understood quite well how to win a wife. Any man who is not positively repulsive can win the hand of almost any woman he chooses, provided he has a few years in which to conduct his courtship.

But, on the other hand, it is not the road to a woman's heart. A woman does not love a man before marriage because he sacrifices himself for her. It is much more apt to make her fall in love with herself. And, besides, it is human nature to desire what we cannot get and to lightly esteem that which comes without exertion. And when a woman believes that one man is irretrievably in love with her charming self, she very probably will wish to keep him on hand while she tries to attract some other man.

Sometimes a woman will marry a man to get rid of him, as the saying is, and fall in love with him after marriage. But it is a dangerous experiment to try, for both parties.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DON QUIXOTE REDIVIVUS.

NO fur ever had time to grow upon the back of any cat which John Cobbs was engaged in skinning. If he failed in doing the thing which he attempted it was never because of lack of energy.

He was at work in his store by six o'clock the next morning, and lost his temper completely because Horace Layton had not come downstairs when he went to Mrs. Wilmot's for breakfast.

That easy-going gentleman, however, never broke his fast before halfpast nine or ten o'clock; and, as he had been out somewhat late the night before, it was nearly eleven before he put in an appearance on Main street.

In his own way, he was about as much interested in John Cobbs' scheme for capturing an heiress as John was himself. There was little amusement to be had in Judithland during the summer; and, as his practice was very small at present, he found the time hang heavily upon his hands. To be sure, he never allowed his work to interfere with his play, for in early life he had tacitly chosen for his motto "Pleasure before business." When he had nothing else to do he was willing, languidly, to interest himself in law cases for a few hours a day. But as both his resources had failed, life was becoming very monotonous, and he hailed the prospect of John Cobbs' enterprise with as much enthusiasm as he ever displayed about anything.

It is true that he had engaged himself to Rosamond Lattimer a couple of months before in order to obtain a respite from the tedium of the warm season. He had no more idea of marrying her than she had of marrying him; and, to tell the truth, they were both becoming somewhat tired, although neither would be the first to admit it.

Rosamond was a young woman whose heart was under too perfect control even to try to persuade her to bestow her hand upon a man, who, at the age of thirty-five, was barely able to support himself. She had not been acting her part upon the society stage for an unknown number of years, with any notion of reaching such an anti-climax as that.

Of course, she had small prospect of capturing a very wealthy man, for they were scarce in Judithland, as they are in the South generally. And equally, of course, she would never for an instant have entertained the idea of allowing a man to lead her to the altar unless she really loved him.

But if you have not naturally a contrary disposition, it is really easier, in most cases, to fall in love with a rich man than a poor one. You may also be certain that Dan Cupid will remain perched above the domestic hearthstone for a much longer period if the little wife comes smiling to the front gate in a ravishing tea gown to meet her husband than if he is compelled to seek her in the kitchen, where, with reddened face and soiled apron, she is just finishing the dish-washing. Bah! It makes me sick to think about it. Yellow soap and dish-water, and turtle doves and love, are forever irreconcilable enemies.

And yet, dear me, Miss Lattimer had for some five years been expecting her twenty-first birthday, which seemed to be unaccountably slow in arriving, and still she was Miss Lattimer. You and I, reader, might consult the

old files of the Judithland Enquirer, which, with unexampled enterprise, or possibly a scarcity of live matter, had always published lists of births. But we scorn such idle curiosity, and very probably if we mentioned the matter the lady would speak sadly of her baby sister who died many years before she came to be her parents' only child.

If Miss Rosamond still remained unmarried, however, it certainly was not due to lack of opportunity. She was one of those unusual women whom you will probably meet with only once in a lifetime, that combine personal beauty with intelligence and a knowledge of the art of pleasing.

As a rule, Dame Nature is much more chary of her favors than the novelist is, and in real life the beautiful woman generally lacks the intellect required to use her charms to the best advantage. She is content to allow her chances for social success to depend upon her face, while she makes no effort to please; and often she destroys the meaning of an adjective in our language by remaining at home for lack of an escort, whom her homely sister secures by the simple process of trying to be agreeable.

For several years after Rosamond came out she was unquestionably the most popular girl in that section of the State, and her lovers were so numerous that she was compelled to register them in a book in order to remember who they were.

But, as it frequently happens with very attractive women, she thought it would never end, and, although each man was nice in his own way, yet she always expected something better farther on. She recently had begun to realize, however, that younger girls were pre-empting the land around her, and that if she did not hasten she might be compelled to choose a rough and rocky quarter-section for her homestead after passing by the fertile acres; unless, indeed, she preferred to remain an old maid.

After I have stated that she was slightly above the medium in height, with a fine, well-developed figure, a fair skin, large blue eyes and magnificent yellow hair, your introduction to Miss Rosamond will be about complete. I must admit that her nose was not exactly classical; but, if you have ever noticed it, good noses are rare in this world.

Her father was a cotton buyer, in fairly prosperous circumstances; but he lived entirely up to his income and had small prospect of leaving his wife and daughter more than a bare subsistence if by chance he should suddenly pass away.

The morning after the picnic Rosamond breakfasted and dressed in a leisurely fashion and strolled down to a small dry goods store on Main street. She required some ribbons, or some gloves, or some other small articles; which, fortunately for her father, are long in buying and short in paying for. And as she came out after completing her transactions she saw Horace Layton and a red-headed man standing in the door of the adjacent store, over which there glittered in new gilt letters a sign which read "John Cobbs."

"Why, good-morning, Miss Rosy!" Horace Layton said. "I was just longing to see you. This is Mr. Cobbs, Miss Lattimer. Mr. Cobbs and I were just discussing a very important matter, and we want the benefit of your advice."

Whereupon the speaker winked at his young lady friend, with a very expressive look on his countenance.

"I shall be very glad to do anything in my power to help Mr. Cobbs," she responded, sweetly.

"Well, come up to your father's office, Miss Rosy, and we will tell you all about it."

"Wait till I get my coat, Bo," said John. "Can't talk to girls without a coat, you know."

The cotton office upstairs was on the opposite side of

the hall from the law office and John Cobbs' sleeping apartment, and occupied the entire length of the building over the dry goods store. In addition to the back windows the cotton room, which was in the rear of the office proper, was lighted by a skylight, under which Mr. Clark, who kept books for Mr. Lattimer, was reading a newspaper.

After the exchange of the usual senseless morning greetings with this gentleman, Rosamond and Horace located themselves near the rear windows, and he rapidly suggested to her the advice which she was to give.

"Well, Miss Rosy," Horace began, after John had come in and taken his seat, "the advice which we wanted was this: Mr. Cobbs, here, is minded to get himself a wife with his bow and his spear, after the Roman fashion; but, as the custom is somewhat out of date, I haven't quite been able to persuade him that she would like it."

"You haven't told me who the girl is," replied Rosamond.

"Oh, excuse me. It's our authoress, Lady Gwendolyn. You see, Mr. Cobbs got into her castle the other day for a few minutes and fell violently in love with her at first sight. He can't wait until her thralldom is over, and he wants to carry her off right away."

"I think it's a splendid idea," said Rosamond, with enthusiasm. "I do not think that there is anything in the world that would please Gwendolyn so much."

"It might be all right, Miss," said John, "if she could see me; but if I put that tin thing on my head she won't know who I am."

Rosamond looked at the red, freckled face of the speaker with the pug nose attached to its center, and inwardly congratulated herself upon her long society experience, which enabled her to keep a serious countenance when she required it.

"But you must dress like a knight," she said, earnestly; "and I know that Gwendolyn will be charmed to be carried off in such a romantic way. And then, when you raise your visor and she sees you, she will be pleased to death."

"I reckon she would," said John, with a satisfied grin. "But we can't both ride on one donkey. That girl must weigh two hundred."

"Well, you put her on the donkey and walk by her side," responded Horace. "It's not much over six miles, and she is certainly worth some trouble. When you get her to town bring her to Mr. Lattimer's house, and I will get the minister and the license, and Miss Rosy and I will wait on you."

"All right, Bo. I reckon it's a go. But, say, can't I leave that tin thing off my head? She'd heap rather see me right off."

"Oh, it isn't possible," Horace answered. "Gwendolyn would cnly laugh at a knight who went out to carry off his lady love and left his helmet at home."

"Yes, really, Mr. Cobbs," said Rosamond, "the helmet is a part of the costume which cannot very well be omitted."

"All right, then," replied John, resignedly. "I'll go the whole hog."

"When are you going to make Gwendolyn so happy?" Rosamond inquired.

"He's going on Monday, if we can get the armor ready," Horace answered; "and we want to get you to help us with the costume for the 'squire. Mr. Cobbs is going to represent Richard the First; and, like all the Plantagenets, he will wear a broom for his crest. You know, of course, how a 'squire ought to dress, and you can get anything you need, and hire a woman to sew and charge it to Mr. Cobbs."

"I shall be delighted to help," said Rosamond, smiling.

"I would do anything to help Gwendolyn to such a nice husband."

A neat yellow man in John's employ came in just then and told him that a gentleman was waiting downstairs to see him on business.

"I've plenty of time to-day, Mr. Cobbs," said Horace, as John arose to depart, "and of course I know that you must be busy on Saturday. I will arrange to have everything ready, and if you will come to Mr. Lattimer's Monday morning about nine Miss Rosy and I will help you on with your armor."

"All right, Bo. I don't know nothing about it, so I can't help none. I hate to put that tin thing over my head, but I reckon the girl's worth it."

"You don't really think that he will try to break into Gwendolyn's house, do you, Horace?" asked Rosamond, after John had gone.

"Not when I get through with him, Rosy. It's a good eight miles to Castle Montmorency, and I am going to get Charley Peters' donkey and a little negro named Jack to drive him. The donkey is the laziest creature on the face of the earth, and the nigger is ten times as lazy as the donkey. If he can get them to go eight miles in eight years he is a smarter man than I take him for."

"But he might get off and walk," objected Rosamond. "He looks as if he would do what he tried to do, and I should not like to get Gwendolyn into any trouble."

"You wait until you see the costume I'm going to get up for him, and you won't be afraid of his walking in it. It is going to be the most outlandish thing you ever heard of. The funny part of it is that the worse suggestions I make, the better he likes them. He don't like to cover up his beautiful face, but he seems to be even resigned to that. You must be very careful, dear, after he leaves Monday

morning. I am afraid that you will hurt yourself laughing."

Horace and Rosamond passed the busiest day which either had spent for a long time. Horace employed a negro tinner and an awning-maker, who were handy men to do what they were told, and by personal supervision and direction he succeeded in completing the suit to his liking, and he had it delivered at Mr. Lattimer's residence before sundown. He breathed a great sigh of relief when he saw it depart; for, although it was conceived in the spirit of fun and he was generally willing to take considerable trouble over his pleasure, yet it began to be too much like work before it was finally finished.

The next day being Sunday, John fumed and worried over his enforced idleness. Sunday laws were quite strictly enforced in Judithland, so he was compelled to keep his store closed; and, as he never thought of going to church, he had a long, hot day to spend with nothing to do. He insisted that Horace should take him to Mr. Lattimer's to try on his costume, but the lawyer was too wily a hunter to allow his victim to examine the snare before he was safely enmeshed in it, and he made endless excuses, which John was obliged to accept. The day, however, like all other days I ever heard of, came to an end at last, and John went early to bed and slept the sleep of the innocent.

To the great admiration of the boarding-house, Horace Layton appeared at the eight o'clock breakfast that Monday morning. Many were the half-ironical compliments, which he received with his usual equanimity. He preferred to enjoy the anticipation of his joke in private, and by several adroit interruptions he restrained John Cobbs from confiding his matrimonial intentions to the assembled guests. John had not spoken of his project on the previous day, for fear that some other fellow might try to get ahead

of him; but now that the time for his adventure had arrived he thought he might safely brag about his prospects, and would have done so if Horace had not prevented him.

The usual summer quiet of Main street in Judithland was interrupted that morning in a strange manner. An approaching noise, which sounded like tin pans continuously falling downstairs, first attracted the merchants from the interiors of their stores. A growing crowd of negro boys soon appeared, surrounding the strangest trio which the street had ever looked upon.

Charley Peters' donkey was soon recognized, with bright pink bows fastened to his ears; and, marvelous to behold, trotting without being urged for the first time in his life. But after the spectators saw the grotesque figure upon his back they ceased to wonder at the donkey's energy.

The man who was riding, for a man it apparently was, wore upon his shoulders a rectangular box about three feet in height by two feet wide. His head, if he had one, was lost in the interior. There were some small holes cut to allow him air, but they were so located that he could in no possible way see anything of the outside world. This helmet was painted half red and half blue, while a rude attempt to draw a fool's head, with cap and bells, was seen in front. Projecting about two feet from the top of the helmet, to which the sawed-off stick was fastened, was a broom, and the doughty scion of the Plantagenets carried another broom with a long handle by way of a spear. The helmet was attached to a canvas suit, on the body of which a great number of pieces of tin were sewed at one corner, and they jangled loudly at every motion of the donkey. His arms and legs were covered with large rings of tin, also loosely fastened, which would have made progress on foot very difficult for the knight, even if his helmet had allowed him to see. Upon his back he carried a huge bundle of tur-

John Cobbs in Search of a Bride.

nip greens, and many streamers of vivid red and blue cloth were attached to his suit between the tin plates.

Every now and then some boy in the crowd more enterprising than his fellows would dart forward and violently jerk one of these streamers, whereupon the knight would strike out with his spear as vigorously as his cumbrous sleeves would allow. But, like all blows in the dark, the greater portion of these strokes fell anywhere but as intended, and most generally alighted upon the head of his long-suffering steed.

This gallant cavalier was attended by a half-grown negro boy, dressed in a gown of parti-colored red and blue. His shiny black face was surrounded by a fool's hood, decked with an enormous pair of ass's ears, also red and blue, along the edges of which small sleighbells tinkled. The squire carried a broom, like the knight, for the purpose of aiding the locomotion of his master; but, as we stated above, his position seemed to be a sinecure.

Down the principal business street they moved, amid the shouts and laughter of the constantly increasing throng. Rosamond and Horace had reached the windows of Mr. Lattimer's office before the arrival of the storming party, which they had directed the squire to conduct by a longer way. The joke was too good for them to allow the people on Main street to enjoy it by themselves.

After passing the city limits, however, the rabble began to thin out. The July sun shone hot above them; and, as the rider seemed bent upon a country excursion, the city boys soon lost their interest. Thus it was that before they had gone half a mile the knight and his squire were the only travelers on the highway; and, except for the rattle of his armor, silence took the place of the preceding clamor.

About a mile from Judithland on the Broadnax road there flows a small stream of water. It is only about a

foot in depth where it placidly crosses the thoroughfare over its bed of pebbles. A convenient place it is for the wayfarer to water his mule when going to town, and the grateful shade of several large oak trees invites him to pause and rest awhile. Some moss-grown stones on one side aid the human pedestrian in passing over dry-shod, and quadrupeds in general show little hesitation in wetting their feet.

By the time the donkey had reached this spot his usual phlegmatic calm had returned to him. And when he arrived at the center of the stream, perceiving that the stimulating action of the broom on his flank had ceased, he concluded to stop also. Like all donkeys, he was a great philosopher, and he argued, sensibly enough, that every effect must have its cause. Now, the sole cause of his progress was the beating he received, and when the cause was taken away the effect naturally disappeared.

But, dear reader, do not for an instant suppose that because I say that all donkeys are philosophers I mean to insinuate that all philosophers are donkeys. No, forever perish the thought. This is one of those poor rules which only works one way, and it is not at all governed by the laws of mathematics or Christian science.

The squire had paused on the bank of the stream in the shade and called out when the donkey stopped and he saw its rider raise his feet to remove them from the water:

"Heah we is, Boss. Where's ma dollah?"

But the helmet of our modern Don Quixote was too tightly constructed to allow communication with the outside world, and as the small darkey objected to wetting the shoes presented to him for the occasion, he sat down by the roadside to await developments.

These were not long in appearing.

Finding that his attendant had deserted him, and that

his steed remained stationary, the knight undertook to aid its progress with his own weapon. Now, the donkey was sure that blows on his head were not in accordance with the rules of the game. He also knew that the day was warm and that the water was cool, and the retainer started for town at full speed, after seeing his master measure his length upon the bed of the stream, on which his fiery charger had also reclined.

How John Cobbs returned to Judithland you will never know. He doubtless could tell you himself, but unless you are fond of a scrap you had better not ask him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A SILVER BARBECUE.

IT so happened that there was to be a political speaking and barbecue in the southern end of the county on the next day, and soon after dinner Horace procured a team from the livery stable and drove off in that direction. Although he could not foresee exactly how John Cobbs' expedition would end, yet he knew it could not be successful, and he thought it just as well to be out of the way until the wrath of the disappointed suitor had somewhat cooled down. It was so much trouble to quarrel with people.

His original intention had been to go on the morning of the gathering, but he was sure that he could make some new friends by going the day before, which was an additional reason for leaving town.

After much hesitation Horace had finally mustered sufficient resolution to announce himself as a candidate for the lower house of the Legislature at the primary election which was to be held about the middle of August. He was naturally an agreeable person and had many friends, and under ordinary circumstances, if he had bestowed a little more work upon his canvass, there would have been only a small amount of doubt as to his success.

The great majority of voters in every community are governed by the most trivial and unworthy motives. If a man will shake hands with a smile and inquire about the

family almost all our intelligent electors will bestow their ballots upon him, regardless of his qualifications, unless his opponent happens to be able to do it more cordially.

It merely goes to show how utterly unfit most individuals are for the franchise. Not a farmer in the county would have hired a fieldhand because he was a "palavering nigger." And yet they would choose a man to fill the most important office in the State for a similar reason.

But in the summer when our story commences there was a more essential test even than the ability to shake hands, by which all candidates were tried. This shibboleth was silver. It is true that the craze was beginning to subside since Mr. Bryan's first campaign, and was destined soon to pass to that sea of oblivion on which the greenback phantom can be dimly discerned.

But at this time still, the first question the intelligent voter asked all candidates from constable to senator was, "Are you all right on silver?" After each had said that he was, for of course no sane competitor would admit being a "gold bug," if his handshaking was satisfactory he was unquestionably a fit person to perform the duties of the important office to which he aspired.

This financial delusion, which has attacked all nations at various times, is a most remarkable instance of human folly. The idea that silver was to be "free" captivated the electors; who, densely ignorant of the nature of money, did not reason that a medium of exchange which all might obtain for nothing, of course, could have no exchangeable value for other commodities.

Unfortunately for Horace Layton's political prospects, he had no thought of becoming a candidate for any office in 1896, when the silver mania was at its highest; and, as he was an intelligent person and quite well-read, he at once perceived the fallacy of the cheap money theory, and he

expressed himself upon the subject somewhat freely. He had, of course, taken no prominent part against Bryan's election, as there was no organized opposition in Judith County, and he had even voted for that gentleman. But as soon as he announced himself as a candidate for the Legislature his views upon the silver question rose up against him like the Afrite from the bottle, and threatened his political destruction in spite of argument or entreaty.

The county in which the town of Judithland is situated is entitled to two representatives. One of the three candidates was sure to be nominated in the primary, because he lived out of town, and the county precincts polled more votes than the city, and besides, he was a popular man with his neighbors.

Thus the race was between the two city men, our friend Horace and a Jew butcher named Tomlinsky. Tomlinsky's only claims for election consisted in the facts that he had been a member of the Legislature for four years previously, and he had always howled against the "crime of 1873." Horace's chances in Judithland were supposed to be better than his opponent's, because the town was beginning to recover from the silver sickness. But, although he became a convert as soon as he decided to run for office, yet the fact that he had been a gold bug was a heavy handicap, under the weight of which even his suave manners could hardly prevent him from being entirely distanced in the political race.

The morning of the barbecue was clear and warm. Horace came to the grounds about ten o'clock in company with a friend, at whose house he had passed the night. A large number of people had already arrived, and they were gathered around the pits, from which the roasting meats for dinner sent forth an appetizing odor.

After about an hour had been spent by the throng of candidates in greeting their friends and in private solicitation of votes, a large majority of those present, who were more interested in the object of the meeting than in the dinner, adjourned to the part of the grove where the speaking was to be held.

At one end of a slight depression in the ground a rude platform had been erected for the use of the orators. This was half encircled by a number of benches made of rough lumber, and the rising ground around was covered with hay and dried leaves for the accommodation of those who were not able to obtain other seats. Over the heads of the assembly some large beech trees nodded and rustled in the pleasant breeze, while shielding the speakers and hearers from the golden rays of the summer sun. It is true that a grove of silver maples had been planted near by for the appropriate use of such meetings, but as these trees had not attained sufficient size to furnish much shade, only the most rampant silver members of the committee had advocated its use.

Several candidates for the State Senate who were present were first accorded the privilege of addressing their fellow-citizens. The sole and only way in which members of the Legislature could have the slightest influence upon the monetary system of the nation was in the election of United States senator. And as each competitor for this office was unquestionably sound on silver, an uninformed person would have thought that the speech-makers would devote their attention to some of the many important State interests which they would have power to build up, if they were elected.

Not so, however. They knew what their constituents wished. Each man when he rose sought to distance his opponents by new and original ways of expressing his de-

votion to the white metal and his abhorrence of the "crime of 1873."

After the senatorial aspirants had subsided, Tomlinsky arose to harangue his countrymen. Most of his speech was merely a garbled repetition of those preceding, but some few sentences here and there may be worthy of preservation.

"Mine frendts, I vass always for silber. Before I comes to dis coundry, in de fadderlandt, I vass down on golt. When you sent me to de las Legislajure I votes for silber efry day. (Loud applause.) Efry mornin' ven I gets up I brush mine hair mit a silber brush, an' I goes to de house an' I votes for silber before I eats breakfas'. (Prolonged applause.) * * *

"Mine frendts, dis young man dat vansh mine place ish von golt bug. I hear him say so mineselft ven Mister Bryan vass runnin'; an', frendts, I fint it out jus' de odder day. His fadder vass a golt bug forty years ago, he vass. He's a golt bug, an' his fadder vass a golt bug. You won't gif no golt bug mine place." (Great applause and shouts of "No! No!") * * *

"Mine frendts, I vass for de Miss'sippi cow. I don' votes for no Kansas cow. I vass for de Miss'sippi cow an' silber for efrybody, an' I hope you sent me back to mine place."

And in the midst of continued applause the perspiring orator retired to his seat.

When Horace Layton arose to reply he perceived a distinct feeling of hostility in the minds of his auditors. As he had been born and raised in that section of the county, he had known most of them intimately during his entire life. On the other hand, Tomlinsky had lived in Judithland barely six years, and his only acquaintance with the surrounding farmers consisted in driving hard bargains

with them when purchasing stock. But free coinage came to set at variance, not only friends, but even those of one household.

I only propose to give a very much condensed synopsis of Horace Layton's speech. I am writing, not an essay on politics, but a love story; and, although it would be as unwholesome for a story to be composed all of love as for a dinner to be all of sweets, yet a twenty-page speech on State issues would be rather too much solid matter for what is to follow.

But if I do not report all of Horace's eloquence, do not think that I have forgotten it. I possess one of those marvelous memories which appertain only to novelists and their characters. You may read one of our autobiographical romances and the hero who tells the story will repeat the most trivial conversations after the lapse of forty years. On the other hand, however, Xenophon reported speeches which Cyrus and his court uttered some hundred years before he was born. And if a historian is willing to prevaricate, surely a professed story-teller may be allowed to.

Horace commenced his address by complimenting his hearers all around. He praised their wives, their children, their crops, their stock and themselves in a most unstinted fashion, and stated that his only source of pride was in the fact that a benevolent Providence had permitted him to be born and raised among them.

Now, reader, you may brag about hating persons who pay you compliments. I have known plenty of people who did. But away down in the bottom of your mind—and you have a very profound mind, reader—you know you think that a man who can so correctly estimate your worth must be an exceedingly clever fellow.

And this was just what happened to our country friends at the barbecue. The adulation which they heard put

them in such good humor that they listened quietly to a speech entirely in regard to the interests of the State, and for half an hour they actually forgot about the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one.

Horace called attention to the facts that the State of Mississippi is still seven-tenths covered with magnificent timber; that the soil is very fertile; that land is cheap; that the climate, with no extremes of temperature, is the best in the Union; that the death rate is lower than any other State, except possibly two or three; and that its only need is immigrants to develop its unexhausted resources and to make their own fortunes at the same time. If sent to the State Capitol, he proposed to enact legislation to attract stalwart farmers from the bleak Northwest to the land where cattle may be pastured out of doors the year round. He would invite the cotton manufacturer from New England to the country where the raw material grows at the door of the mill, and where labor and fuel are cheap and plentiful. And he drew a captivating picture of the advantages sure to accrue to the farmer by such an influx of capital.

But Tomlinsky, who had been listening with barely concealed impatience, began to get nervous. He did not like the attention which Horace was receiving; and when a round of applause was bestowed upon our friend after an unusually optimistic sentence, Tomlinsky began to call out as soon as the noise would allow his voice to be heard:

"Mishter Laytont! Mishter Laytont! Ish you a golt bug? Dot's vat ve vanshts to know. Ish you a golt bug? Ish you a golt bug?"

Alas! he broke the spell. What chance had an advocate of prosperity to be gained by hard work to argue when the voters, one and all, were chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, with

the firm conviction that they would obtain money for nothing if they could succeed in catching it?

Horace felt his disadvantage at once, but he replied with a smiling countenance:

"Why, Mr. Tomlinsky, I promise right now, that if my good friends will honor me by allowing me to represent them in the Legislature I will vote for the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one whenever I have a chance."

But Tomlinsky was not to be silenced by any such promise as that; and, getting more and more excited, he continued to cry out:

"Ish you a golt bug? Ve don't care how you votes. Ish you a golt bug? Ish you a golt bug?"

Horace, in vain, endeavored to obtain sufficient quiet to explain his opinion on the subject. Tomlinsky's cry was taken up all through the audience, and the speaker was finally hooted off the stand amid prolonged shouts of "Gold bug, gold bug!" "Sit down, sit down!"

In private solicitation Horace had little more success with the electors. A few of the more intelligent farmers were able to appreciate the strength of his argument; that, even if they were unwilling to trust his recent accession to the silver camp; yet, as no question concerning the white metal could possibly come before the Legislature for decision, he would have no opportunity for treachery.

But the great majority of the voters, and among them some men with whom he had been on the most intimate terms since his boyhood, passed him by with a stare, or possibly a faint nod; and if he attempted to join a group in conversation they would deliberately turn their backs and walk away. Such was the height at which this madness still lingered in the country districts, that men made it a personal matter that other men should disagree with them.

But now the dinner-horn sounded and the company speedily gathered around the rough board tables. Each guest was served with a chunk of barbecued beef, mutton or pork, as he chose, upon wooden "picnic plates" and accompanied by a large piece of baker's bread.

And, really, meats cooked in this way are delicious. It may be the savage part of our nature which is gratified by a return to a primitive method of cookery. The open air in which the food is served may add to the charm. But if you do not believe that barbecued meats are good, just try them. That is all I have to say.

The only beverages which the committee furnished were coffee, lemonade and water. Tomlinsky had provided a large jug of "red-eye," but it was patronized only to a limited extent. The taste for whisky must be acquired amid convivial surroundings, and a swallow or two of the fiery stuff out of a jug is not apt to attract a young man. True it is that the jug trade in our prohibition counties excites much attention among interested parties at times. But fifty jugs at the county express office make a great show at Christmas. And what does fifty gallons of whisky amount to among fifty thousand people?

Another candidate had furnished a couple of kegs of beer to treat his constituents; but, although this was more popular than the stronger liquor, yet one of the kegs was nearly full when the day closed. The taste for beer is also acquired, while that for water comes by nature.

After dinner was over, certain solicitants for official positions in the county proclaimed their detestation of the yellow metal from the rostrum. Horace, however, did not wait to hear these denunciations. Hitching up his horse, he drove off to town in the blaze of the afternoon sun.

To say that he was disgusted with his countrymen seems to be too feeble a term to express his feelings. After all

the bother of his canvass, to be treated in such a fashion was simply outrageous. He was sorry that he had taken the trouble to arm himself for the combat. He would withdraw now, but he had already requested that his name be printed upon the official ballots, and it seemed to him cowardly to retire from the tournament after he had entered the lists.

He consoled himself with the reflection, however, that if he was not elected to the Legislature he would be saved a great deal of worry and annoyance; and just as he arrived at this comforting conclusion, and, tired and dusty, approached Judithland in the cool of the evening, he met David Elmore driving out the girl he was engaged to behind Colonel Elmore's fast horse.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ROSAMOND'S WAY.

DAVID ELMORE slept but little the night after the picnic. Mortification over his broken engagement and despair of success in his love affair prevented him from closing his eyes until nearly morning. Poor David did not understand the motives, or rather the absence of motives, which characterize a young girl's conduct. He pictured her floating up the aisle in radiant white to meet Dr. Houston at the altar, while the familiar wedding march resounded from the organ and he himself watched the couple from the outer darkness. Lack of self-confidence in a man is a serious deficiency. But, really, did not we feel so and spend similar sleepless nights when we had our first attacks of love?

Afterwards it comes easier. A man may love, and love, and love again; but the first time is when it shakes the firm foundations of his being.

I am afraid that David's business suffered the next day. Fortunately, as it was summer, there was comparatively little doing in commercial circles; but, nevertheless, his cash persistently refused to balance, and it was late at night before he finally located his errors and closed the bank where he had been at work alone.

He came to a new resolution that evening. He never expected to go to Columba's home again, and the thought that he could ever love another woman did not enter his head. But he had a morbid fear of being laughed at, and

as people in small towns take much more interest in their friends' affairs than they do in their own, he determined to cut short their ridicule by paying pronounced attention to some other girl.

Among all the young women of his acquaintance, he considered that Rosamond Lattimer would be the most suitable for his purpose. He knew, of course, that she was engaged to Horace; but he also knew how many other men she had been engaged to during the past five or six years, and in this instance people said there was small prospect of a speedy marriage.

And then she was unquestionably the most beautiful woman in Judithland, as well as the most intelligent and agreeable. Can you realize how David could have thought so? It is a fact that a man may love one woman to distraction and yet know, with his mind, that in many respects she is inferior to others. He probably will not admit it, even to himself, but he knows it all the same.

The truth is, that during the few years just passed David had really enjoyed the company of Rosamond more than that of the woman whom he loved. I am giving you a number of paradoxes; but, take my word for it, that they are absolutely true. When he was with Columba he felt painfully shy and awkward, frequently sitting for an hour without saying a word, while she invariably devoted her attention to anyone else who was present, and only occasionally had something halfway rude to say to David.

On the other hand, Rosamond always took particular pains to draw him out. She never interrupted his half-formed sentences or laughed at his hesitating flowers of speech. And when on his homeward road from a *tete-a-tete* with her, he invariably had the comfortable feeling that he had said some good things and held up his end of the conversation remarkably well.

David did not know that this was only Rosamond's way, and that she bestowed the same kind of attention upon all her admirers. But if he had, I do not believe that it would have made any difference. While he much enjoyed being appreciated, he did not think that he possessed a monopoly of the merit of the world. Indeed, he supposed that he had very little of it.

He did not wish to go to the home of Mamye Clay for tea the next Sunday evening; but as he had promised, of course, as a gentleman, he must keep his engagement. He excused himself, however, and left as soon after tea as he politely could; although Mamye insisted that he should stay longer, and told him that he would be sure to find Dr. Houston at Mrs. Wilmot's.

Young women like Mamye are not attractive to men of good breeding. A refined gentleman does not like a girl to "throw herself at his head," as the saying is, which Mamye was continually doing. It is customary in modern society for men to make the advances, and there are many delicate ways in which a woman may display her preference without coarsely giving it utterance.

To be sure, fast girls find their admirers among a certain class of men, and at times receive a great deal of attention. But I do not believe that even these men generally care to marry them.

It was in pursuance of David Elmore's newly-formed resolution to pay attention to some other girl that Horace Layton met him driving with Rosamond Lattimer, when Horace was returning to Judithland after the barbecue.

"Mr. Elmore," said Rosamond, "I have been just longing to see you all day. I had a letter from a friend of mine this morning who wants me to give her some advice, and I do not know anybody who could do it as well as you can."

Rosamond had addressed David as Mr. Elmore ever since

he first began to go out into society. It always pleases a young man to receive a title from older people, while an elderly bachelor likes to have the debutantes call him by his Christian name.

"Why, Miss Rosamond," he replied, very much flattered, while a faint glow of color began to tinge his cheeks, "I shall be delighted to help you in any way in my power."

"I knew you would," she returned, with a smile, "and that was the reason why I asked you. You see, my friend writes that she is engaged to a man and—well, she says she has gotten tired of him. I really do not think that she was in love with him when it started; but she writes me that she was, so I suppose that we ought to believe her. But, anyway, she wants to break it off now, and she doesn't know exactly how to do it. You see, Mr. Elmore, when a man gets to be between thirty-five and forty years old he generally has such stereotyped ways. Every girl knows when he makes pretty speeches to her that he has said the same things in the same way to dozens of other girls, and somehow it takes away all the interest. My friend's fiancé is getting pretty old, and I suppose that is the reason why she is tired of him. Anyhow, she wants some advice about what she ought to do, and that is the reason why I ask you. A man always knows so much more about such things than a woman does. You don't think that she ought to marry him just because she promised, do you?"

"I do not think that anyone ought to marry if they do not love," he responded. "But I do not think, either, that she ought to have engaged herself to him unless she was in love with him."

She made a little face at this, not enough to be noticeable, for she had excellent control over her countenance.

"But do you not think that she might have been mistaken? Or she might have been in love with him and got-

ten over it after she became more intimately acquainted with him and found out how many faults he had."

"I do not believe that anybody could mistake being in love," said David, solemnly shaking his head; "and I know that a person who is once in love can never get over it. The faults of the one you love have nothing to do with it."

"That is what Tennyson said," she replied. " 'Love is love for evermore.' Do you know, it is wonderful how much more a man knows about such things without being taught than a woman does. Now, I have never been in love, either; but I do not know half as much about it as you do. I would have thought that a person might love a good many different times—of course, with some years between. It must be very nice," she continued, reflectively, with a faint tinge of sadness in her voice, "to know that there was someone in the world who loved you, and for whom you would go around the world on your knees, if it pleased him to have you do it."

He made no reply, and, glancing at him out of the corners of her eyes, she perceived the embarrassed flush spread over his face, which always appeared when David thought of his unpromising love affair.

For some minutes they rode in silence, while their horse climbed slowly up a long hill, on either side of which clay banks covered with honey locusts shut out the last despairing rays of the setting sun.

But when they reached the summit, the resplendent sight which greeted them was an ample compensation for the gloom of the valley they had just passed through.

The sun was going down like a blood-red ball sinking into a purple sea. He seemed to know that his store of colors would soon be annihilated by the sable hue of night, and he scattered them on the clear dome of heaven with lavish profusion. And yet, with such care did he work

that, from the crimson which half surrounded him to the fast approaching violet of the east, only Omniscience could have told where one tint ended and another began.

David stopped his horse at the top of the hill, and he and Rosamond gazed upon the sunset in silence.

"Isn't it magnificent?" said Rosamond, finally. "I always think that the gates of heaven must look something like that."

"Can you blame the ancients for worshiping the sun?" she continued, after the orb of day had departed and the horse had taken up the interrupted thread of his journey. "I do not see how they could have done anything else."

"I certainly cannot," said David. "They knew as well as we do that everything good in this world comes from the sun, and it was only natural for them to worship the giver of life and health."

"It seems strange, does it not," she said, "that everything in the world comes from that little red ball that we just now saw go out of sight. It is hard to believe."

"And yet it is literally true," returned David. "I remember reading a pretty legend once about how the sun gave man his best gift."

"Oh, please tell it to me, David—Mr. Elmore, I mean. I do love old legends. I think they are charming."

"I am afraid that I have forgotten it. I learned it by heart when I was a boy, because I thought it was pretty; but it has been such a long time ago."

"Please try to remember it," she entreated. "Tell me as much of it as you can, anyhow. I do love legends."

"Well," he said, after a few moments' reflection, "it went somewhat like this:

"Once a man stood alone on a cliff, and he cried to the rising Sun:

"'Oh, great Sun, I am lonely. Give me a companion.'

"And the Sun said: 'I have given thee the trees of the forest and the flowers of the plain. What more dost thou need?'

"But he answered: 'The trees find their company in the breeze and they laugh at me, and if I take the flowers to my heart, lo, they wither and die. Give me a companion.'

"And the Sun said: 'Have I not given thee the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air for thy companions? Are not these enough?'

"But he answered: 'The animals run far away when I approach, and the birds mount up to heaven when I come nigh. And, oh, great Sun, I am lonely. Give me a companion.'

"And the Sun said: 'Have I not given thee the dog and the horse to be the friends of man? Why ask you for another?'

"But he answered: 'The horse bears me in the chase by day and the dog guards my habitation by night, but my joys and my sorrows they cannot share. Oh, great Sun, give me a companion.'

"Then the Sun said: 'All my good gifts have I lavished on thee, and still they are not enough. Shall I rob heaven itself for thy sake?'

"But the man cried the more: 'Give me a companion, great Sun, for I perish in this solitude.'

"Then the Sun had compassion on the man because that he was unhappy, and he took of the celestial ether and fashioned him a woman. From the blue of the sky he made her eyes, and her hair was golden as the sunbeams. Her bosom was round and white as the summer clouds, and he tinted her cheeks and her lips with the rosy hues of the west. He made her tall and stately as an angel, and endowed her with his own sunny disposition.

"And he brought her to the man as he sat bemoaning

his desolate fate. And when the man saw her he was glad, and he bowed himself and said: 'For that she is a part of heaven, I will worship her forevermore.'

"There is a little more of that legend," David continued, "but I believe I had rather not repeat it. I don't altogether agree with the man who wrote it, and I think he must have had a little family fuss just before he finished it."

"Oh, but that is beautiful, David, beautiful. You have such good taste. And I don't see how you could remember it all. I cannot memorize two sentences. But, Mr. Elmore, please tell me the rest of it. You know that all women are as inquisitive as the sunbeams."

"Yes, Miss Rosy, that is true. But remember Eve and Pandora and Mrs. Bluebeard. Think what trouble they got into because they wanted to know everything."

She made a comical little face at this, and her voice had just a faint suspicion of a caress in it as she replied:

"Yes, but that was because the men who wrote those stories hated women, and didn't want them to learn anything. I am sure that you would not treat me that way."

"You are right, Miss Rosamond, I wouldn't. And it was just because I had such a high opinion of women that I did not want to tell you the rest of the legend. It is not complimentary."

"Well, if it is so very bad," she said, smiling, "I will try to forgive you for it, and maybe I can succeed. But you must tell me anyhow."

"Well," he replied, "it ended this way:

" 'Worship her not,' said the Sun, 'worship her not. Be kind to her and just to her, but let her pay respect unto thee. Set her not up as an idol in thy house, but may she be thy companion and helper, looking to thee for direction and guidance. For be well assured that the powers of na-

ture are man's friends, while he governs them to his uses, but unrestrained they are his devastating tyrants. If you rule her kindly she will love thee forever, but allow her to reign over thee and she despises thee. And remember that the blue sky in her eyes may become overcast; that thunder and lightning come from the summer clouds, and that even the sun may scorch with a fervent heat.'

"And the man took his wife, and unto this day it has been even so. The woman who is ruled loves, but she who exercises command holds the man in contempt."

Rosamond remained silent for a few moments after David ceased speaking.

"It is not exactly complimentary," she said, slowly, "but I believe that it is true. I do not think that I could love a man who would let me manage him. It would show so little character."

"But, Miss Rosamond," said David, earnestly, "how could anyone have any idea of ruling a person whom he loved? If I loved a woman I should worship the very ground she walked on, and how could I think for a moment of commanding her to do anything that she did not wish to do?"

"No, I would not like a man to command me to do a thing, either. It makes everybody obstinate to be ordered around. And neither do I think that a man should interfere with little things which concern his wife entirely. I hate a man who is always meddling with such things. But at the same time I know that there are many things in every family which must be decided by one person or the other, and I could have no respect for a man who would give up their decision to me. Why, do you know, I have actually known men who would let their wives buy their clothes for them. What poor-spirited creatures they must have been!"

Just before she retired that evening, Rosamond lit the gas upon each side of her dressing-table and gazed for a long time at the reflection in her mirror. Two tiny pencilings were beginning to appear at the corners of her eyes like the first faint ripples in the streamlet which precede the coming rapids.

She eyed them with disfavor.

"He's a nice boy," she said to the image in the glass. "He's a nice boy. What a little fool Columba Wilmot is! I wonder why he loves her?"

She commenced to rub the wrinkles in a vain attempt to make them disappear.

"He's a nice boy," she said again. "I am not much older than he is. I know I can cut out that little fool, and then— He's a nice boy. Well, I don't know."

She hastily turned out the lights and disappeared in the darkness.

What didn't she know? If she didn't know, reader, surely you and I cannot understand. Besides, what right have we to listen to a maiden's meditations in the privacy of her own apartment, anyhow?

## CHAPTER X.

### A PERSISTENT SUITOR.

ON the same Sunday evening which we spoke of in the last chapter it happened that Columba Wilmot had again gone with Dr. Houston to call upon his mother. You may consider it not altogether proper for the young lady to go to the home of her lover so frequently; indeed I, myself, disapprove of it; but really I do not believe that Miss Columba cared a spoonful of baking powder about what we would think of her conduct.

She invited Dr. Houston to ask her to tea on Friday, because she wished to be out of the way when David came to take her to the picnic, and as Mrs. Houston had been slightly unwell that evening, and only saw her for a few minutes, leaving her to take tea alone with her admirer, Columba expressed a wish to see his mother again to inquire about her health, which wish, of course, the doctor was delighted to gratify.

For Dr. Houston considered that the best method for him to win the hand of his sweetheart would be found in publicity. While, of course, he had too much sense to untruthfully say that he was engaged to Miss Columba, yet he always denied it in a smiling fashion, which caused people all the more to think it a fact. He did this deliberately, because he knew that there is no prescription for the prevention of rivals one-tenth part so efficacious as that of an accepted suitor taken daily.

At the time our story opened, the doctor's method of procedure had worked so well that Columba rarely received a visit from any other man, with the single exception of David Elmore, who only came because he could hardly help himself. This was what usually happens in such cases; for, while a man does not, of course, expect to marry every woman he visits, yet the sole object of society is, or ought to be, the bringing of young people together for the purpose of choosing their mates for life; and when a girl has already made her choice, there is no reason why other men should waste time upon her.

This Sunday evening, strange to say, Columba expected to see David. Why she should, I cannot understand. She had been almost unpardonably rude to him, but with a woman's intuition she had long ago divined that he loved her, and she apparently believed that no slights or insults of hers would have any effect upon him.

But Dr. Houston came in and told her that David had gone to take tea with Mamye Clay; for, as David was now his only possible rival, the doctor always took pains to inform Columba of any attention which he paid to other girls. The physician had small fear of David's competition, but he generally preferred to be on the safe side; and as soon as Columba heard of David's engagement she at once asked the doctor to take her to his mother's, as I stated before.

"How are you this evening, Mrs. Houston?" Columba said, when she and her escort had taken seats upon the front gallery. "I hope you feel better than you did Friday."

"Oh, much better, thank you, Columba," Mrs. Houston returned. "Dr. Houston prescribed for me, and I felt better right away. It is such a comfort to have a good doctor in the family, and I know you will always find it so.

What was it you gave me, Doctor? It helped me as soon as I swallowed it."

It sounds somewhat peculiar for a woman to address her son by his title, but this pair of people firmly believed in making every tooth of the rake gather straw.

"Oh, nothing much, Mother. I thought a nerve tonic was indicated, so I gave you a little valerian, with sulphate of morphia, of course, and a few other remedies. You know it won't do for a doctor to tell what his prescriptions are composed of. People might learn to cure themselves, and not send for him any more."

"Well, they certainly send for you often enough now. You would be surprised, Columba, if you knew how many patients the doctor has. They are ringing him up over the telephone all night long. It is terribly hard work, but he has such a good constitution that it doesn't seem to hurt him any. Some of them pay him twenty-five dollars a visit, too, when he has to go out of town. All he needs now is a good wife to help him spend his money."

"Yes, I think my practice will be very much better after I am married," said the doctor. "There are so many people who do not like to employ an unmarried physician. Even Miss Columba here will never send for me when she is sick."

"Why, I have been having Dr. Chester ever since I was a little girl," returned Columba, "and I never thought that it would be exactly right for me to change now. He has always been so kind."

"Oh, Chester is a good enough doctor in his way," Dr. Houston remarked, somewhat contemptuously; "but he's awfully old-fogy in his notions. You know that young Jayne who died here of malarial fever two weeks ago? Well, when I was called in I found his temperature a hundred and ten, and I administered antipyrine, of course,

and succeeded in getting it down to a hundred and two; but his father got scared because he didn't look natural; of course, he couldn't with all that fever, and he insisted on calling in old Chester to consult; and the old fool said he didn't believe in antipyrine, anyhow, and he wanted it stopped. And I wasn't willing; of course, I knew how to treat the case. But Jayne was so scared that I threw it up, and the young fellow died the next day. I could easily have pulled him through if his father had left me alone."

"Of course, that was what he might have expected," said Mrs. Houston, complacently. "It's funny that people are not willing to trust a good doctor when they get one. You don't send for Dr. Chester very often, I hope, Columba, do you?"

"Oh, I'm sick all the time, Mrs. Houston," Columba responded. "I never do draw a well breath, but I manage to drag around somehow. If I didn't have to help my mother I think I'd go to bed and stay there."

"You ought to have a good doctor in the family, Columba," the doctor's mother said. "He could build up your constitution in no time."

"Oh, well, there's no hurry, Mother," said Dr. Houston, somewhat impatiently. He harped on this string himself continually when alone with Columba, but he did not wish anyone else to play his tune for him. "Miss Columba can take her own time."

Columba said nothing. When *tete-a-tete* with her lover she either laughed at his persistence or abused him for it. But she did not wish to quarrel before a third party, and she did not feel in a humor for ridicule this evening.

"Did you go to church this morning, Columba?" Mrs. Houston asked.

"No, I couldn't very well, Mrs. Houston," Columba an-

swered. "I can't stand those hard benches. I don't think it does you any good to go to church when you are so uncomfortable all the time."

"I understand Dave took Miss Mamye to St. Andrew's," the doctor untruthfully remarked. "They tell me she's going to leave the Baptist Church. Dave certainly is giving her a most tremendous rush. He walked home with her Thursday, took her to the picnic on Friday, went to see her Saturday evening, and has been to her house twice to-day. We will have a wedding in the old town before long if this thing keeps on. Well, it's about time Dave was getting married, and Miss Mamye would be glad to marry anything."

"Dave's not going to marry Mamye Clay," Columba broke out, sharply. "He wouldn't marry that kind of a girl."

"Well, maybe you know," the doctor returned, with a slight sceptical laugh. "It looks to me mighty much that way, however. A fellow's not apt to go to see a girl every day, unless it is all fixed up."

"Why, you come to my house every day," she replied, angrily, "and I have no idea of marrying you."

"That is entirely true, Miss Columba," he said soothingly. "But you know it is the exceptions which prove the rule. And I don't think Dave will be one of the exceptions."

"Really, Mamye is not a bad kind of a girl," Mrs. Houston interposed. "She is a little wild as yet, but she will get over that, and I expect that she will make David a very good wife."

Columba bit her lip and said nothing. She was sorry for her last remark as soon as she had uttered it, because she did not wish to be rude to Mrs. Houston. She had found out by long experience how very difficult it was to

make the physician angry; and, therefore, she cared little what she said to him.

As you have perhaps noticed in her short speeches reported, Mrs. Houston was anxious for her son to marry; and, wonderful to relate, she was even willing for him to marry Columba. Of course, she knew that Columba was nothing like good enough for her son, but then what girl was? And, although she should certainly have preferred for him to remain single if he had not studied medicine, yet she was firmly convinced of the necessity of a wife for a successful physician, and therefore she was ready to sacrifice her own feelings.

She was considerably puzzled, however, over the length of time which her son's courtship had lasted. How Columba or any other girl could fail to jump at such a chance was more than she could comprehend. But the doctor did not confide his prospects to his mother any more completely than occasional intimations that he would marry the young lady in the end, and so she was compelled to remain in ignorance as to the cause of the delay.

As there seemed to be some friction in the progress of the conversation, after a short pause she changed the subject.

"Didn't you tell me that Gwendolyn's novel was nearly finished, Doctor?" she asked.

"Yes, I saw the bulletin down at Wood's when I went there to get my calls this morning. It said that she had written the last chapter, and that she only had to revise it, and that it probably would be finished in two weeks. It said the publishers were wild to get it."

"How does it happen that they post the bulletins at Wood's, Doctor?" Mrs. Houston asked. "I should think Gwendolyn would send them to the bookstore. Mr. Trescott sold so many copies of her other books."

"Oh, you know, Mother," he answered, "she sends them to the Enquirer office and they put them up at Wood's because it is the most frequented corner. They generally come in the morning and they put them on the board so as not to keep people waiting until they get out the next issue. I think Lady Gwendolyn stipulated that they should post them as soon as received when she offered to send them."

"What is the new story to be called?" inquired Columba.

"It has not been announced yet," replied the doctor. "She always keeps that until the last thing. But the bulletin this morning said that Lady Gwendolyn would remain at home this fall, instead of going abroad, as usual, as soon as she finished a story. You know she has always said that this country is too common for a genius to write about, and she's been going to Europe to breathe the atmosphere of her stories until the inspiration seizes her, when she comes home to write. But this time she has announced that she is going to take a sure enough vacation and see something of her neighbors."

"I'm real glad of it," said Columba. "I hope we'll all have a chance to get well acquainted with her. I think it would be such a privilege to know a real genius. I've only met her three or four times."

"Why do you suppose that Gwendolyn has never done her work in Europe, Doctor?" asked his mother. "It seems to me that, as she always writes about Europe, she could do better if she stayed there."

"I understand she did try to rent one of those old castles on the Rhine some years ago," he returned. "But, of course, you know she would have to shut out the tourists, and they asked such a whaling big price for it that even she couldn't stand it. She said it wasn't any use in wasting her genius writing a story if she had to pay all she got

for it for a place to write in; so she turns her home into a castle when she is working, and I believe she thinks it does about as well."

"Oh, I wish I could see her when she is writing a story," Columba exclaimed. "I think it would be perfectly lovely."

"Well, you can't, Columba, I am sorry to say," said Mrs. Houston. "She even objected to seeing the doctor, and wanted him to prescribe for her over the telephone; which, of course, he would not do. And then she made him dress up in a gown and a wig and powder his beard. I wish I could have seen him. It must have been awfully funny."

"It was plenty of fun when I got the check, though," the doctor remarked, complacently. "A hundred and fifty for six visits is pretty good pay, I think. It was funny when Miss Zenobia telephoned to ask me to prescribe for her. Gwendolyn thought I could hear her heart palpitate over the telephone, but she was so scared that she was afraid to get up and go to it, and Miss Zenobia made her negro men move it to the bed; and, of course, they broke the connection and couldn't get it fixed, and one of them had to hustle in here for me as fast as he could."

"Was she much sick, Dr. Houston?" asked Columba.

She had heard this story before, and if she had been alone with her admirer she probably would have told him so. But as she had been quite rude a few minutes before, she was anxious to atone to Mrs. Houston for it by appearing much interested in her son's conversation.

"She wasn't sick at all, Miss Columba," he answered. "She had taken too much food on her stomach at one time, that was all. But she thought she was dying, and it shows how powerfully her work affects her, because even then she wouldn't have me come on the place without being dressed in a costume which would not disturb her environment. Miss Zenobia made me talk to her in the

L. of C.

style of her story, and I expect to have a prominent place in this novel as an old Jew with a white beard and a fur cap.

"How awfully interesting!" murmured Columba. "It must be perfectly lovely to be a genius and be able to write such splendid stories."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A PARTY IN PROSPECT.

JOHN COBBS was furiously angry with Horace Layton on account of the failure of his assault on the heiress; and, after a violent altercation, they stopped speaking to each other.

This was not so annoying to Mrs. Wilmot's household as it might have been, because John being always early and in a hurry, and Horace always late, they did not meet at meals.

Just about this time Horace found everything going somebody else's way. His row with John Cobbs bothered him, because it was considerable trouble to remember to pass without speaking when they met on the street. It also deprived him of his afternoon chess, of which he was very fond. He never thought of procuring a set of men and a board for himself. In addition to the fact that his canvass was progressing so unsatisfactorily, his sweetheart all at once turned cold and bestowed her favor on another man.

Horace really cared as little for Rosamond as he did for the office for which he was a candidate, and he would willingly have given up either on very slight provocation. But it is one thing to abandon some object which we do not wish, of our own accord, and quite a different matter to have another man take it from us with a strong hand. It was on this account that Horace began actually to exert

himself to retain his fiancee, and to obtain his office, as he perceived that his chances for both were fading away.

Rosamond might ask advice as to the best method of putting an end to an engagement, but certainly she did not need any. All women understand how to accomplish such a task without being taught and to make it appear that the separation is entirely the fault of the man.

Really, it is very simple, and especially so if there is another man obtainable to devote himself to the girl.

First, she tells her betrothed that she does not wish to go everywhere with him, as there will be plenty of time for that after they are married. Then he must not come to her house so often, for people will talk, and she wishes to keep the engagement secret for a time. After this she spends her evenings with the other man continuously, and when her affianced remonstrates, as he naturally must, he gets a note accompanied by a ring, some letters and a few other trifles. In the note she is heartbroken because she has bestowed her love on a man who does not care for her, as she knows that a man who loved her would trust her. She could *never* marry a man who possessed such a jealous disposition, as he would be *angry* if she even *looked* at another man. She sends back his presents and will *never* see him again, but *never* expects to get over his breaking her heart in such a cruel fashion. And there are about six pages more of the same kind, which ends his little affair.

Rosamond formed a correct estimate of David's disposition. With most men she knew that a rival is a great incentive. But she thoroughly understood David's lack of egoism; and, knowing that he loved another girl, she thought her best chance would be in establishing a friendly intimacy, which later might ripen into something more definite.

"Good-evening, Mr. Cobbs," said David, coming into the store one afternoon about three weeks later. "Good-evening, Miss Mamye. Is there no chess going this evening?"

"Why, hullo, Davy," said John, looking up from the ledger on which he was at work and turning round on his office stool. "Where'd you come from? There ain't nobody to play no more, Bo. Miss Mamye'll play hearts with you, if you want to, and I reckon she'd play hands, too, if you give her any kind of a chance. Wouldn't you, Miss Mamye?"

"Dave don't want to play hearts with me," Mamye Clay responded. "He's dead in love with Rosy Lattimer. They're going to be married in the fall."

"Yes," said John, grinning, "and I'm dashed glad of it. "Excuse me for saying it, Miss Mamye, but I never can think of that fellow Layton without cussing. The scoundrel is getting left all 'round these days. Dave's going to marry his girl, and Tomlinsky is going to do him up to-morrow as sure as I'm a foot high."

"Do you think he will lose the election to-morrow?" asked David, willing to change the subject from his own affairs. "I don't take much interest in politics, but I thought 'most everybody was going to vote for him."

"Oh, he'll get a fair-sized vote in the city, Bo," John answered; "but the county will smash him sho'. I was talking to an old duck from the rural districts yesterday, and he said he wouldn't get ten votes out of town. Those fellows can't swallow a gold bug no more than Miss Mamye can get some fellow to marry her."

"That's only because I won't have them," Mamye rejoined, pertly. "You asked me yourself the first day you came before you thought about riding out to try to catch Gwendolyn. You know you did."

This was a tender subject with John Cobbs, and his

flame-colored face grew redder and redder. He had had several quarrels with men who were inclined to poke fun at him on account of his misadventure. But, of course, he was never intentionally rude to a girl no matter what she said, so he frowned and kept silent, while she rose and went to meet Mrs. Medlock, who had just entered the store.

"I want to see you a minute, Mamye," Mrs. Medlock began. "Who is that back there? Oh, only Mr. Cobbs and Mr. Elmore. I will go back and sit down for a little while. I am tired, 'most to death. I walked all the way out to call on those new people who have taken the old Barefield house, and when I got there the woman sent word that she was busy, wouldn't I call again? And the worst part of it is that they are Methodists, and I have to go, and I can't even tell her what I think of her. Oh, what I wanted to ask you, Mamye, was this. Where did you get the pattern for that— Why, good-evening, gentlemen, good-evening. Don't get up. I will sit over here. I hope I am not interrupting anything. I won't stay a minute. I just wanted to ask Mamye for a pattern. I just saw your old sweetheart, Mr. Elmore, driving out with Dr. Houston. You were quite right to console yourself as you have; quite right. I think Miss Rosamond is a mighty nice girl, and she will make you a good wife. I declare I shall be real sorry when the parsonage is finished. I am having so much fun teasing Columba and Mr. Layton. He rather got the best of me when I first went to Mrs. Wilmot's, but since you cut him out I never give him a minute's peace. He's really getting sensitive on the subject. I was walking with Mrs. Houston just now, Mr. Cobbs, and she was telling me that Gwendolyn had finished her story and is going to give a house-party to celebrate its completion. It's going to be called 'The Kiss of Death.' Mrs. Houston told me that the bulletin says that it is even better

than the other stories which Gwendolyn has written, and that she is certain to make a lot of money out of it. Now is your chance if you want to get a good wife. Gwendolyn is not going to Europe this fall, she's going to stay right here, and it probably will be three or four months before she starts another story. You ought to make pretty good progress in that time."

"I ain't going to dress up like a fool no more," said John, frowning. "I wouldn't do it for all the women in the world."

"Why, no, you don't have to," Mrs. Medlock returned. "Gwendolyn is a good deal like other people when she is not at work on a story. You would hardly realize, when you meet her, what a great genius she is. But you must be certain not to call her Miss. She prefers to be called Lady Gwendolyn, or just plain Gwendolyn; but if you were to call her by her real name, Miss Smith, she would never speak to you again."

"Well," said John, "if I don't have to cover up my head no more, I reckon I would stand a pretty good show. But how can I get an introduction, Mrs. Medlock?"

"Why, 'most anybody would take you out to Castle Montmorency to call. But, really, you ought to go to the house party. Are you going, Mr. Elmore? Can't you get Mr. Cobbs an invitation?"

"I just got one about two hours ago myself," David replied, "but I hardly know Miss Gwendolyn well enough to ask her to invite anybody else. I cannot say yet whether I can get off to go or not."

"Oh, you ought to go, by all means, Mr. Elmore," said Mrs. Medlock. "Columba is going, and Dr. Houston will go out every evening and stay all night. Are you going, Mamye?"

"I haven't been invited," Mamye answered, in an in-

jured tone of voice. "But I don't know Gwendolyn very well," she added.

"That is too bad," returned Mrs. Medlock, soothingly; "and after your selling so many copies of her books, too. Never mind, Mamye, I haven't been asked, either. We'll have a house-party of our own some day. I don't see why Gwendolyn should leave you out."

"That's dead easy, Mrs. Medlock," said John, grinning. "Gwendolyn knows that if Miss Mamye was in the pot that she'd try to run off with some of her men, and she wants them all herself."

"Why, you won't be there for me to run off with," Mamye retorted. "And I know you don't think Gwendolyn would miss anybody else."

"Good-evening," said Horace Layton, who had entered the store without being noticed by anyone.

John looked up and scowled, and turning round to his desk he picked up his pen.

"I haven't got a minute to stay," Horace went on. "I just wanted to say, Mr. Cobbs, that I got a note from Gwendolyn this afternoon, and she asked me to suggest two or three men for her to ask to her party. She's been keeping to herself so much that she is somewhat short on gentlemen friends. If you want to go, I will send her your name."

"Don't think I can go," said John, shortly, without looking up from his ledger.

"Well, think it over and let me know in the morning. I haven't time to sit down. I am very busy just now. Good-evening."

And the lawyer walked away with a quick step, quite unlike his usual languid movement.

"Why, that's the very thing, Mr. Cobbs," said Mrs. Medlock, briskly. "How lucky it is for you!"

John turned on his stool and sullenly watched the attorney, as he disappeared from view at the front of the store.

"I ain't going nowhere that fellow asks me," he said.

"Why, he won't ask you," Mrs. Medlock rejoined. "He will only suggest your name, and Gwendolyn will ask you herself. And, really, Mr. Cobbs, I don't think that you ought to be so angry with Mr. Layton, because you did not succeed that time. It was not his fault that you didn't get to Castle Montmorency. And, really, I believe that if you had gotten out there you would have succeeded. I don't think that you could have found a better way to win Gwendolyn's heart."

"Well, maybe so," returned John, his frown somewhat relaxing. "But he went and covered up my head, and I couldn't have no show, if she couldn't see me."

"Of course you had to dress like a knight," the preacher's wife responded, "and the knights always wore helmets on their heads. I am so sorry that I did not get to see you that morning. I think it was real mean in Mr. Layton not to let anybody know anything about it."

"Oh, he looked perfectly beautiful, Mrs. Medlock," said Mamye. "Didn't he, Dave? And he had every little nigger in town to go along with him, just like a circus parade. Why, where are you going, Davy?" she added, as David rose and picked up his hat.

"I must be going," he replied. "I have an engagement."

"I guess we know where you are going, Mr. Elmore," said Mrs. Medlock, smiling. "But it is no use going there this afternoon, because Rosamond is at Mrs. Blank's reception. I met her going there just before I came in here. And that reminds me that I have to go there myself," she continued, rising. "I will walk along with you, Mr. Elmore. Good-by, Mamye. I will see you at tea

to-night, Mr. Cobbs, and talk to you about the house-party."

"There," Mrs. Medlock exclaimed, suddenly interrupting her own conversation, which had flowed continuously while she and David walked several blocks after leaving the store; "if I didn't forget to ask Mamye about that pattern. Maybe I will see her at the reception, though, if she can get away from the store soon enough."

## CHAPTER XII.

### A LOST SWEETHEART AND A HOPELESS ELECTION.

THE morning of the primary election was cloudy and threatening. It had been raining during the night, and when Horace Layton's alarm-clock, borrowed for the occasion, went off at six, and he slowly and unwillingly arose and opened his shutters, he saw dense masses of watery vapor rolling themselves across the sky, apparently uncertain whether they would maintain their point of vantage, acquired during the absence of their great enemy, and discharge volley after volley of raindrops upon the defenseless earth; or abandon the field to the army of the sun, whose early beams were even now pressing them in their rear.

But the general or the cloud who pauses in a career of conquest is quite apt to suffer a disastrous reverse; and the sun gradually forced his way through the ranks of his foes, and came to the relief of his ally. The defeat of the storm king's skirmishers, however, was scarcely accomplished by nine o'clock; and when Horace sleepily commenced his toilet, he was certain that the day was to be rainy; and that he had thereby acquired, not only a fighting chance to win the election, but even a comfortable assurance of victory.

It is a well-established fact that fair weather is required to bring out the vote of the rural districts; and even the alluring tones of the free silver bell could not entice the honest farmer from his home into the wet.

A strange characteristic of human nature it is that men will fight for years; will give up home, and family, and fireside; will sleep out of doors in the snow and the rain; will patiently endure wounds, and fever, and death, for the privilege of governing themselves; and yet these same men are unwilling to walk two hundred yards in a drizzle to exercise this right, unless it be to vote for some smooth-spoken politician, who seeks the office for the sole purpose of robbing the man who put him there.

Verily, verily, man is a peculiar creature, and hard to understand.

However, Horace got dressed after awhile, and taking an umbrella in one hand and a large bundle under his arm, he went out of Mrs. Wilmot's door.

Just as he placed his hand on the gate latch a medium-sized negro man, in a ragged suit of clothes, splashed with mud above the knees, came slouching along on the road to the business part of the town.

"Why, bless my boots, Cato," Horace exclaimed, "where did you come from? I didn't know Miss Gwendolyn ever let you come to town when she was busy."

Horace had become very well acquainted with Gwendolyn's coachman, while looking after that lady's business affairs during her frequent absences in Europe.

"Lawdee, Mister Layton," the negro replied, with a grin which showed a fine set of white teeth. "Lawdee! Is dat you? How you git up so soon in de mawnin'? Fur de Lawd's sake, Boss, don' tell Miss Gwen'len yo' done see me in heah. I done lose de bes' place in de county, ef yo' does."

"Why, but, Cato, won't she miss you when she comes downstairs? I thought she wanted you every day."

"She don' need me no mo' now, Boss. Lemme tote yo' bunnel, Mister Layton. Wha' yo' gwine so soon in de

mawnin'? Fur de Lawd's sake don' tell Miss Gwen'len yo' done see me in heah."

Horace, of course, was glad to surrender his burden, and he and Cato walked on together toward the livery stable whither he was bound; the Caucasian being by right of his birth about half a step in advance of the African.

"But I don't understand," Horace continued. "You say Miss Gwendolyn doesn't need you any more? She hasn't finished her story, has she?"

"Dunno 'bout dat, Mister Layton. But she done git troo wid all de niggers. Ain't none ob us seed her fur mor'n two weeks. She done lock me up in de wood'ouse undeh de house. She say I'se de viljon, an' dat's de darn gin fur keeps, an' she gwine to keep me dar widout nawthin' t' eat till I'se dead. She a'ways kill me some'ow w'en she get troo wid me. But Tom he lemme out soon as she gone, an' I puts on dese ole close an' comes in heah ebry mawnin' jes to see de odder niggers. An' fur de Lawd's sake, Mister Layton, don' tell Miss Gwen'len yo' done see me in heah."

"Why, of course, I'm not going to tell her, Cato. If she's had you killed, I don't suppose it makes any difference where your ghost walks."

"Dat's right, Boss, haw, haw, dat's right. Ghosties kin walk whar dey pleases in de mawnin'. Dat's a'right."

"But look here, Cato. I think Miss Gwendolyn must have nearly finished her story. Cupid brought me in a note yesterday evening, asking me to come to her house-party next Monday, and you know she wouldn't have sent him unless she was about through with it."

Cato stopped suddenly on the sidewalk.

"Dat so, Boss," he said. "Den I reckon I mus' be gittin' back, 'cause she may be wantin' her car'ge. I ain't seed none ob de niggers sence yistiddy mawnin'. I tote yo bunnel whar yo gwine, Mister Layton, an' den I scoot back."

Horace's early visit to the stable was for the purpose of seeing his cloth "advertisement signs" properly placed on the hacks which he had engaged to carry his voters to the polls. There were only four of these vehicles kept for hire in Judithland, and with an unexampled burst of energy, Horace, more than a month before, had obtained the promise of all of them for election day, and then had forced Oates, the stableman, quite unwillingly, to sign a contract to furnish them on that occasion.

Pleasing himself with the idea of comfortable carriages to take his friends to vote, while Tomlinsky's must trudge through the rain or not vote at all, Horace walked briskly into the stable, where Oates was seated, tilted back in a rush-bottomed chair, calmly chewing tobacco.

"Good-morning, Mr. Oates," Horace said. "Are my carriages ready yet? I want to have my signs put up and send them to take some of my friends downtown before the polls open."

Oates looked composedly at him without moving for about a minute, and then squirted some tobacco juice from between his teeth.

"Your hacks, you say, Mr. Layton," he slowly replied. "Well, there they is."

And there they were, sure enough. Four carriages standing in a row.

"But where are the horses?" Horace asked. "Have them hitched up right away, please. I want to get them started off as soon as possible."

Mr. Oates leaned forward in his chair, spit out his mouthful of tobacco juice, and then deliberately tilted himself back again and replied:

"Hosses, you say? I don't know nothing 'bout no hosses. I hire you four hacks, there they is."

"Why, what are you talking about?" said Horace, some-

what impatiently. "What use are hacks without the horses? Have them put in right away, Mr. Oates. I want to start them off in a few minutes."

"Here's your 'greement, sir," Oates responded, patting one hand on his breast. "Don't say nothin' 'bout no hosses. Says I hire you four hacks, an' that's all."

"Why, that is perfectly absurd," Horace protested. "You know very well that in law the intention governs, and not the wording. You contracted to furnish me four hacks, and that, of course, includes the horses and the drivers."

Mr. Oates looked up at the rafters, then out of the door; then he put his hands in his pockets and calmly responded:

"Can't say nothin' 'bout no'ntention, Mr. Layton. I hire you four hacks, there they is. You can take 'em or leave 'em."

"D——n it all!" exclaimed Horace, angrily. "Are you going to get me those horses or are you not? I'll sue you for ten thousand dollars damages if I don't get them in less than ten minutes."

The stableman yawned and then took one hand out of his pocket and rubbed his eyes.

"You'll have to sue, I reckon," he replied, phlegmatically. "But I can't let you have no hosses, 'cause they're gone."

"Gone! Where?"

"Must a'ben stole, I reckon. Anyway, they're gone now."

"Stolen? Why, what's that over there?" cried Horace, excitedly, pointing towards the rear of the building, where a negro man was just finishing a superfine polish on a Kentucky thoroughbred.

"Colonel Elmore'd git me if I hitch his mare in a hack."

"You've got some more horses down there, too," Horace

shouted. "Are you going to let me have them or are you not?"

"You needn't sweat under the collar, Mr. Layton," Oates returned, composedly. "Those ain't my hosses."

"D——n it all, do you mean to tell me that somebody came in here and stole your horses and left all the others?"

"That's what I said, sir."

"Well, why ain't you out looking for them?"

"I've had two niggers out for morn'n an hour."

Whereupon Mr. Oates took a large plug of tobacco out of one pocket and a knife from another.

"I don't believe it," cried Horace, furiously. "I shall commence my suit at once, and you'll hear from me, Mr. Oates."

Which said, he turned on his heel to walk out of the stable.

"It ain't my fault, sir," said the owner of the establishment, as he began to cut an immense chew of tobacco from the plug in his hand. "I can't let you have no hosses when I ain't got 'em, and anyway I only hire you four hacks, and you can take 'em if you want 'em."

As soon as the attorney had gone, Oates crossed one leg over the other and winked at his man, who came forward, leading Colonel Elmore's mare.

"There don't no darn gold bug git any of my hosses," he observed.

And then he closed his speaking orifice with his chew of tobacco and comfortably proceeded to enjoy it and contemplate the rafters.

Horace Layton was too mad to think what he was doing; and, forgetting his bundle of painted cloth, which Cato had deposited in the stable, he strode rapidly up the street in a towering passion, and had reached the outskirts of Judithland before he realized where he was going. He

had based so much of his hopes of success upon the votes to be gained by sending the incorruptible electors through the rain to the polls in these carriages, that their loss at a time when it was hardly possible to replace them was a most grievous disappointment.

He came to himself, however, and turned to walk slowly back to breakfast. He set all his gray matter in rapid motion in a vain endeavor to think of some means of retrieving his loss; but none of his plans appeared to be serviceable. There were a few private carriages kept in the city; but, although Horace was well acquainted with their owners, he was ashamed to ask to borrow them for a purpose of this kind. He believed that he could get the use of some dray mules for the day, and he thought of taking Oates at his word and utilizing the horseless carriages. But he was too angry to return to the stable; and, besides, he knew that the liveryman would probably invent some other excuse for refusing to let him have them.

He had just reached the disheartening conclusion that he would be compelled to go through the fight without any means of conveying his friends to the polls, when, as he turned into the street which led to Mrs. Wilmot's, the first rays of the morning sun shone full upon six gayly-decorated country wagons which passed Horace, briskly moving toward the stable. On each, extending from mule's breast to wagon back, he read in large letters of silver the following inscription:

"Vote for Tomlinsky, the people's friend. Down with the gold bugs."

And so it went all day. Horace worked as he had never worked before. He borrowed a buggy, and really did everything which could be done. But somehow it had come out, no one knew from where, that Tomlinsky was to be elected, and this announcement, of course, changed

many votes; for your average citizen likes to go with the crowd, and if he could tell with certainty who would win the election, three times out of four he would cast his ballot for the prospective victor, regardless of qualifications or opinions.

About nine o'clock that evening Horace abandoned the field and left the court-house, where the Judithland ballots were being counted. As there were a number of candidates and a large vote, the count was not nearly finished. But as Tomlinsky had so far been credited with about two votes for every one received by our legal friend, and as the county was known to be almost solid for the butcher, the result of the legislative contest was practically decided.

While, of course, Horace was in a measure disappointed at the conclusion, yet his principal feeling was one of distinct relief that the canvass was over. He had been working for more than a week very much harder than he cared to do. So thoroughly employed had he been that he had not laid eyes on Rosamond Lattimer for about ten days.

This was the very opportunity which the young lady was looking for. She had been seeking a reasonable excuse for breaking off her engagement with the attorney for several weeks, but hitherto had found no way of proving him to be in the wrong.

For, as soon as Rosamond began to bestow her favor upon David Elmore, Horace redoubled his devotion, and until the election fever had become very hot, there was really no fault which she could find in his conduct.

Many a girl in similar circumstances would have been unpardonably rude herself and then have blamed the man for it all. But this was not Rosamond's way. While she had not the slightest intention of marrying an unprosperous attorney, yet she really liked Horace, and wished to

keep him for a friend, and to terminate her engagement in as sweet a manner as possible. And thus the fact that he could take more interest in his election prospects than in his sweetheart resulted in a kind and regretful note which Horace received during the day, and which caused him to direct his footsteps toward Mr. Lattimer's residence as soon as he left the court-house.

Rosamond's father was the possessor of one of the finest houses in Judithland. It is also true that the mansion was endowed with a fine, large mortgage; but, under our modern civilized methods, such skeletons are discreetly hidden from the view of the passerby, and are not even to be seen in a closet, but only in the strong-room at the court-house.

The ancient Greeks managed differently, and all the world could run and read on the pillar of debt the exact amount which the dweller in the palace was required to pay before he could properly call his residence his own.

Would it not be a good idea if we introduced some such contrivance at the present time? Suppose that, after a fine dinner, a file of the host's unpaid bills was passed around for inspection. We might thus learn exactly whom to thank for our comfortable sense of repletion. Instead of the urbane gentleman who welcomed us being the giver of the feast, that honor should rightfully be ascribed to a number of other people.

Thus the meat market, the fish dealer and the grocer had furnished the viands which the cook so deliciously served up. The wines which we drank were supplied by the liquor dealer. Even the table under which we so comfortably stretched our—well, our pedal extremities—ought rightfully to belong to the furniture company, and each had small prospect of receiving any return for what he had furnished.

If we had a system of this kind in operation we might have a less number of fine entertainments, but those which we had at least would be honest.

In the obscurity at one end of the veranda of Mr. Lattimer's residence there was a little nook embowered with climbing roses; and there, all unconscious of the mortgage, on a settee just big enough for two, Miss Rosamond was seated. And when I say the seat would hold only two people, you may be sure that I have a good reason for making the statement. Indeed, I believe that if there had been room for only one in the nook, Rosamond would not have been there.

By the light of the setting moon she saw a well-known figure come in the front gate, and she immediately whispered to the gentleman at her side:

"Here comes Mr. Layton. Promise me, please, that you won't leave until after he goes."

"Why—I—of course I'll promise if you wish, Miss Rosy," returned David, much flattered. "But I came so much before him, would it be polite for me to outstay him?"

"No, I have a particular reason, and you must stay until he goes. We'll keep quiet, and maybe he won't see us," she added, as her second caller came up the steps.

But Horace Layton was too well acquainted with Miss Rosamond's methods to be deceived by such a silent prevarication as that. He had been in the nook himself. As soon as he reached the veranda he turned his eyes in that direction; and, perceiving something white in the darkness, he at once went towards it.

David would have given up his seat to the newcomer if the lady had not hurriedly whispered to him that he must remain where he was. Poor David lacked the ability even to retain his rights. But, as it happened, Horace was him-

self compelled to go after a chair, an opportunity which Rosamond used to reiterate her command to David not to leave.

The old saying that two is company but three is none was well exemplified on this occasion; for, after the first somewhat awkward greetings, there might as well have been no company present, for all the conversation that could be heard.

Horace was somewhat annoyed at finding David there, because he wished to explain his lack of attention to Rosamond, and he was also quite depressed by the result of the election. The lady present had nothing to say to her discarded suitor; and, besides, she was a little bit ashamed of the way in which she had broken off from him. And so it came to pass, after a few minutes, that diffident David was compelled to lift the burden of the conversation himself.

"Tell us how the election is going, Mr. Layton," he said. "I hope you are going to win."

"Thanks, David," Horace returned. "I think there's hardly a chance of that. Of course, we can't tell positively until the county returns are in, though, and we may have to wait for the official count. Candidly, though, I haven't gotten as many votes in the city as I expected."

"Why, what was the matter? I thought 'most everybody in town was going to vote for you."

"It was all on account of that fellow Oates, and I think I have good ground for a suit against him. I engaged all his carriages for to-day more than a month ago, and this morning he had the assurance to tell me that his horses had been stolen. I knew all the time it was a falsehood, and I was so mad that I couldn't see straight. I tried every way to get some more horses, but I couldn't, and I believe that lost me the city. And here, this evening,

nearly six o'clock, the scoundrel had the insolence to send my carriages up to the polls with my announcements on them, and told the drivers to tell me he had just got his horses back; and, anyway, he didn't bargain to hire them to me for all day. Everybody was laughing at me, and I'll get ten thousand dollars damages out of him if I get a cent."

"Why, that was a mean trick. What made him do it?"

"Why, they've all got a notion that I am a gold bug, although I've told them again and again that I would vote for silver if I ever got a chance."

The conversation here lapsed again, for Rosamond preserved an obstinate silence, and Horace was not any too anxious to talk. After a few minutes David put his shoulder to the wheel and pushed it a little farther along.

"It must be a good deal of work to run for office," he said.

"You're right it is, Dave," Horace responded. "To tell you the truth, I'm sorry I ever went into it. I've been working like a nigger all this time, and for no use in the world. It has kept me so busy that I haven't had time to see my young lady friends, and I don't believe any of them will speak to me any more. I'm blessed glad it's over now, though, and I really hope that I am not elected. I shall be saved any amount of bother."

Rosamond here broke silence and remarked somewhat acidly:

You do not suppose that any sensible girl would object to a man working, I hope, Mr. Layton. Of all creatures in this world, I think a lazy man is the most despicable."

Horace instantly saw his advantage. He might be lazy, but it never prevented his brain from working quickly.

"Well, I'm not so sure of that, Miss Rosy," he replied,

with a smile, which, of course, was invisible in the darkness. "Only this afternoon a young lady friend of mine was objecting most strenuously to my being so busy that I had not had time to go to see her. I've always thought, too, that she was the most sensible girl I ever knew in my life."

This retort somewhat confused the young lady. To be sure, she had taken the entirely inconsistent position of not wishing to marry a man because he was lazy, and then breaking off her engagement with him because he went to work. But you know that a woman would not be a woman if she was consistent, and so you will not be surprised when you learn that Rosamond changed sides at once.

"I do not think a gentleman should ever be too busy to call on his young lady friends," she said. "I hate a man who neglects his friends. Don't you think so, David—Mr. Elmore, I mean?" she added after a moment's pause.

"Why—I—yes, I do, Miss Rosamond," David returned, slowly. "I generally try to get through all my work in the daytime so I can go calling at night."

"I don't know how it is, Davy," said Horace, with a laugh, "but it seems to me that you are neglecting Miss Columba most tremendously these days. Jim Houston comes to our house every evening, and you haven't been there for a coon's age. He had her out driving this afternoon again."

David was too embarrassed to reply, and he felt his cheeks burn hotly. But Rosamond came to his relief at once. She would not allow him to be imposed on if she could help it.

"Why, I am surprised at you, Mr. Layton," she said, resting upon another entirely inconsistent position. "You surely do not think because a man has been to see a girl a few times that there is any obligation upon him to

continue to call. That is one of the principal privileges men have—that they can choose their young lady friends and go where they please."

Really, Miss Rosamond has gotten herself into such a tangle of contrary statements in three short speeches that I think we will have to leave her to find her way out the best she can, or even allow her to remain there, if she prefers it. However, she succeeded in keeping David until after Horace left, which was not so very late, for Horace soon divined that the other man intended to sit him out, and as this was unprecedented in David's conduct, the lawyer, of course, guessed that Rosamond had told him not to go. Therefore, as he saw no chance of coming to an explanation that evening and had no desire to annoy the lady, he took his departure about eleven o'clock, and David Elmore soon followed him.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CASTLE MONTMORENCY.

AS I mentioned in the first chapter, Castle Montmorency is situated on a little hill, surrounded with an inclosure planted thickly with ancient magnolia trees.

It is a fine old house, of some thirty rooms, and in the ante-bellum days, before the prosperity of the South had excited the envy of the people who originated slavery on this continent, it had witnessed many a scene of gayety and mirth.

Its spacious halls had resounded to the music of the dance, and its guest chambers were ever filled with the neighboring gentlefolks. Many were the lovers who had strolled by moonlight under the perfume of the magnolias, and each daughter of the host remembered a wedding breakfast as the end of pleasure and the beginning of happiness.

From the kitchen to the dining-room endless feasts had passed; the sideboards were constantly laden with rare old French brandies, and the popping of champagne corks resounded as continuously as the croaking of frogs in a marsh.

In the ample stables numerous thoroughbreds from the blue-grass region stamped and whinnied; while from the quarters of the negroes, when the light day's work was done, the real plantation melodies and the hearty laughter

which has its only source in entire absence of care, formed a fitting foil to the calm of the twilight.

But alas for the owner of "Idlewild," as the plantation was then called, it is the fixed and immutable law of fate that the bill follows the banquet as certainly as the headache follows the champagne. "Idle" and "Wild" is a bad combination on which to base prosperity, and French brandy is not a good beverage for a man who ought to check commission merchants' accounts.

Thus it happened that for the jovial owner of "Idlewild" the deluge came in the latter part of the fifties; and swept plantations and slaves, house, furniture and livestock into the maelstrom of the commission merchant, who had a mind to set up for a country gentleman on his own account. Whether some little ark of safety bore the former owner of these good things into quieter waters you will never know. Too many similar misfortunes have occurred in this world for us to pause for the purpose of considering one of them.

The change in ownership of "Idlewild," however, proved to be its salvation. The new proprietor had recently come from the North, and had been a near neighbor and warm personal friend of the principal general from that side in the civil war. And when an overwhelming force of invaders reached the state, the former ardent pro-slavery advocate changed suddenly into a rampant union man and procured a guard for the protection of his plantation home from the ravages of war.

During the dark days of reconstruction, more properly called reannihilation, our ex-commission merchant turned politician; and, having artistically used his Northern birth to hide his short career as a slave-owner, he speedily amassed a comfortable fortune; and, selling his plantation, he disappeared from this novel in order to enjoy his

wealth as soon as the white people of the South resumed the government from which they had been ousted.

It is generally considered to be in better taste, and likewise more healthy, for a robber to leave the scene of his exploits before his victim has armed himself and returned thirsting for vengeance.

At the close of the war the wealth of the prostrate South was exactly represented by a zero, and her people began again to build their fortunes from the very bottom. But after the end of a few years' rule of the politician her wealth consisted of an enormous minus quantity, and the inhabitants of the reconstructed States were compelled to fill a yawning cavity of debt before they could obtain any foundation on which to re-establish their fallen prosperity. And yet these same politicians, after fixing this stolen load of debt and adding grievous taxes from which the South received no benefit, have had the continual assurance to twit this section of our country with lack of progress and culture. Progress! When a man is searching for bread he has small chance to win in a foot race.

I mention these few facts in order to show how "Idlewild," or "Castle Montmorency," as it was now called, came into the possession of Gwendolyn's father.

Almost the entire force of the company had assembled in the authoress' favorite glade the afternoon of the second day of the house-party to await the arrival of Dr. Houston and the announcement of dinner. Being so young, it was almost impossible for the doctor to leave his patients to the care of another physician for a day, and he had even grave doubts as to the propriety of departing from Judithland at five o'clock and returning the next morning at nine. But as he only had three patients, whose worst ailment was a light case of measles, I do not think that there was much danger of his being missed.

Gwendolyn was seated in her favorite antique chair, with her chin resting upon her hand. This was the pose she had assumed when her latest picture was taken, and it had recently been much affected by her. A momentary silence had spread over the company, and Gwendolyn was thinking—dear me! how can a feeble, mortal mind pretend to understand the working of the gray matter in the brain of everlasting GENIUS? I started to say that in my humble opinion she was thinking how effective this picture was, and was also wondering how many more magazine publishers would write to ask for it. I beg pardon for my temerity in trying to fathom unsearchable depths, and hope that I may not offend again.

Rosamond Lattimer occupied a rustic chair, and she was engaged in winding yarn, which David, obedient to her order, was holding for her from his seat on the grass at her feet. I am really ashamed of Rosamond for adopting such a time-worn method of attracting a lover, but if the characters in the story will insist on lack of originality, surely the novelist is not to be blamed.

The shawl which Miss Rosy was crocheting much resembled the web which Penelope wove, for I am confident that she was working on a shawl of the same pattern the previous summer at Sweet Gum Springs. Now, I do not wish to appear censorious, and Rosamond may have finished a dozen shawls during the year; but when I see a young woman rush off in frantic haste to get her fancy-work ten minutes before dinner at a summer resort, I naturally suspect that the said work receives small attention at home, or in the privacy of her room at the hotel.

It is no use telling me that Penelope was so grievously afflicted over the loss of a husband who left her twenty years before to fight for another woman. No, indeed! She worked at her loom during the day to show her lovers how

industrious she was; and, having so many, of course, she had difficulty in making up her mind, and she enjoyed keeping them in suspense, just as any other woman would. If there had been but one suitor instead of a hundred, she would have remained Mrs. Ulysses only during a decent period of mourning.

From the hammock which Horace Layton gently swung by means of a stout cord, Columba was watching Rosamond and David with a dissatisfied expression on her face. John Cobbs and Gwendolyn's distant cousin, Mr. Joyce, with his recently married wife, made up the remainder of the company.

Horace Layton destroyed the momentary silence.

"I don't altogether agree with you, Lady Gwendolyn," he said. "It seems to me that an author ought to be able to supply local color and incidents from his imagination and from reading history without the necessity for having it acted before him."

"You are entirely wrong, Mr. Layton," the authoress returned, with some asperity. "That is the reason why Shakespeare and I have succeeded so much better than other people who have tried to write fiction. Shakespeare happened to write pretty well, because he was an actor; but I alone have discovered that the inspirations of genius only come to an author when she dresses in the costume of the period of which she writes."

"Well, how about Thackeray?" rejoined the attorney. "Don't you think he was a genius? He never did anything of that kind."

"Thackeray!" exclaimed Gwendolyn, scornfully. "Well, Mr. Layton, is that your idea of genius? Whoever reads Thackeray nowadays, I should like to know. I suppose that when he wrote some people read him because there was nothing better, but that was a long time ago. Why,

any one of my stories has had a larger sale than all of Thackeray's works put together. I tried to read one of them once, I think it was called 'Robert Esmond,' or something of that kind, and I went to sleep half a dozen times before I had finished forty pages. There wasn't anything in it at all, as far as I went; no fighting and no love-making, and nothing that people want to read about. If he had thought about my way of having the parts acted before him, he might have found out his deficiency and have written something worth reading. Nobody ever went to sleep reading one of my stories. They just couldn't do it, because I keep up the interest."

John Cobbs looked at Horace out of the corners of his eyes, and a rueful smile spread over his countenance.

"You're mighty right, Lady," he said. "They just couldn't do it."

"Oh, but tell us, Gwendolyn," said Rosamond, "how you manage with your love scenes. Do you have them acted, too? It must be awfully interesting."

"I have never succeeded as well with my love scenes as I should like to," the authoress replied. "I don't think they come up to the standard of the rest of my work. When I was writing 'The River of Blood' I tried to have one of my men make love to my maid, but he didn't know how, and I could not make him understand the way to do it. Negroes don't seem able to comprehend love-making."

"You ought to get Mr. Layton to give you a specimen, Gwendolyn," Rosamond suggested. "He's had experience."

"I have had a little, and that's a fact," returned Horace. "And I am not the only one, either. But if I were to make love to Lady Gwendolyn I would fall dead in love with her sure enough, I am more than half-way in love

with her now, and that might interrupt the next story. It would be much better for you to see both sides, anyway, Lady Gwendolyn, and I think that Miss Rosy and David will give us an exhibition. Now come on, Dave; don't be bashful."

"I can't," David stammered, "I can't. I never tried. I don't know how."

But Rosamond came to his rescue.

"You must not think, Mr. Layton," she said, "that because you have made love to so many girls without meaning anything that all men are like that. There are some sincere, honest men left in the world, even if you cannot realize it."

"Haven't you ever been in love yourself, Gwendolyn?" Columba asked from the hammock.

"Why, really, no, Columba," Gwendolyn returned. "I have never felt that it would be right for me to spare the time. When a person has certain talents given her, no matter how feeble they may be, I think that she ought to use them to their fullest extent for the benefit of the world."

"But don't you think, Lady Gwendolyn," asked Horace, "that a real, desperate love affair would improve your stories?" I think it is a good scheme for an author personally to have the experiences which he writes about, as far as possible."

"How silly you are, Mr. Layton," Rosamond broke in. "Do you think Nero was any better author because he murdered his mother and burned Rome to improve his style? And please don't put such notions into Gwendolyn's head, because she might poison us all some morning just to realize how the villain in her story would feel after doing it."

"Well, if she did," Horace retorted, "we ought all to be

proud to lend our assistance in constructing a work of genius. Surely, Miss Rosamond, you would gladly sacrifice your poor little life on the altar of immortality."

"You ain't much in the habit of doing that kind of thing, are you, Lady?" asked John, grinning. "I ain't quite ready to die yet, and if I was I couldn't see you no more."

"Here, Mr. Cobbs, this won't do," said Horace. "You must do better than that. Now, I would gladly sacrifice not only my life, but even my new straw hat to please Lady Gwendolyn."

"And never see me any more, Mr. Layton," Gwendolyn rejoined, with a smile. "I believe I like Mr. Cobbs' compliment the best. A man ought always to be ready to die for a woman if it is necessary, but it is much better for him to save her life and his own, too. In my stories the heroine always marries the hero in the last chapter."

John looked somewhat puzzled, for, to tell the truth, he did not know what a hero and a heroine were; but as it seemed that somebody got married it suited him exactly, and so he said:

"That's right, Lady. That's the ticket."

"But that brings us back to my original proposition, Lady Gwendolyn," said Horace, "that you ought to get married. Don't you think so, Mrs. Joyce?"

Mr. and Mrs. Joyce were seated together on a rattan settee, occasionally exchanging a few words in low tones and paying little attention to the conversation in progress. They had a sofa pillow lying between them, behind which a hand of each disappeared in a very suspicious manner.

"What did you say, Mr. Layton?" asked Mrs. Joyce, looking up when her name was called.

"I was merely remarking," Horace returned, "that I have always been told that married people were the most

miserable creatures on the face of the earth, and I wanted my statement confirmed by good authority."

"He didn't say anything of the kind, Mrs. Joyce," Rosamond interposed. "Mr. Layton has been trying to fool some girl into marrying him for so many years, without succeeding, that he is real mean and envious to people who have."

"I think being married is just perfectly lovely," said Mrs. Joyce, looking fondly up at her husband. "Don't you, dear?"

"Well, really, Katie," he replied, smiling back at her, "I have not been married long enough yet to give an unprejudiced opinion. Ask me again in a year or two and I will see what I think about it."

Gwendolyn's aunt, Miss Zenobia Dreadnaught, as the authoress had renamed her, who had come from the house, now approached the group.

"Gwendolyn," she said, "Dr. Houston telephoned to say that he was sorry, but he had a very sick patient, and he could not possibly come out this evening. And, Columba, he told me to ask you if you would please come to the telephone for a minute. He wants to ask you a question."

"Oh, bother!" Columba burst out. "Excuse me, Miss Zenobia, but won't you please tell him that I am busy and can't come? I am not going all the way to the telephone just to talk to him."

"He seems very anxious, Columba."

"I am so much obliged to you, Miss Zenobia; but really I can't come."

"Very well," Miss Zenobia responded. "Gwendolyn, dinner will be ready in a few minutes. I will tell Dr. Houston, Columba."

As the party strolled up the walk towards the house they

were met by Cupid, the small black page of the establishment.

"Miss C'lumby," he said, grinning—he was always grinning, that boy—"Miss Zeny say de docto' say you mus' come to de 'phone jes' a minute. He boun' to talk wid you."

"Tell him I won't come, Cupid," said Columba, sharply. "If he wants to ask me anything he can come out here. I'm not going to stand at the telephone to talk to him."

Horace Layton, who was walking with Gwendolyn in front of the others, here paused and turned around.

"All you people," he cried, "behold the delights of being an engaged man. Here is a poor young fellow who would lay down his life for the woman he loves, and she is not willing to take half a minute's trouble for him when it may be a matter of life and death. You just wait until you are married, young woman, and if he don't get even with you I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet."

Columba put her arm around Gwendolyn's waist and led the way towards the house.

"I am not engaged to Dr. Houston, Mr. Layton," she said in passing. "I have not the slightest idea of marrying him."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF GENIUS.

WHEN our friends had finished dinner they passed into the library, and John Cobbs, suddenly discovering that he had lost his knife, of course an attentive hostess could do no less than go out to her favorite glade with him to look for it. The time-honored excuse for young couples in similar circumstances is a burning desire for water, which somehow suddenly disappears when an inviting sofa under the stairs is reached. But even the most brazen young man can hardly ask for water as soon as he leaves the dinner-table.

Miss Zenobia caught up a thread of discourse which the departure from the dining-room had broken.

"I want to show you my journal, Rosamond," she said. "I know that you will be interested. You see," she continued, as she went to her desk and took out a large book in a richly tooled morocco binding, "it is volume five. I have been keeping it now for four years, ever since Gwendolyn commenced to write. I put down in it everything that Gwendolyn does and what she eats and drinks, and everything that she says when she is writing. I tried to put in everything that she said all the time, but I couldn't hear it all when she was not writing, and she so often forgets when I ask her to repeat it. You know it is the little things about great authors that people want to know. There never was a genius who had such a complete biography before. Just, by way of example, take the single

item of food. We have been told, of course, what some authors were fond of and what they were not; but nobody ever thought before of putting down everything they ate. I suppose it is right that the greatest author should have the greatest biography, but it does seem strange that nobody ever did it before. As soon as she finishes a story I make a summary of everything which she ate and drank while she was at work on it. Just think how interesting that will be to future generations! I have only one regret in my journal, and that is that I did not know how great she was going to be when she was a baby. Of course, if I had known I would have commenced it then, and you can imagine how much more interesting even than it is it would have been. It can't be helped now, however, I am sorry to say, and so I have put down everything that I can remember about her childhood."

"That must be awfully interesting, Miss Zenobia," Rosamond remarked, when the other lady paused to take breath. "When are you going to publish it?"

"Why, I have had any number of offers from publishers," Miss Zenobia replied, "but I was waiting until she finished 'The Kiss of Death.' I am going to commence to prepare it for publication now, and it probably will come out next spring. It is certain to have a most tremendous sale when it is published."

"What a pity it is," said Horace, "that Lady Gwendolyn has not had any love affairs to be reported *verbatim* in your book."

"It is real bad, Mr. Layton, but it can't be helped. It would add so much to the interest."

"Just give her a few days longer, Miss Zenobia," Horace replied. "I am very much mistaken if she don't have a real love story for you to write about before the week is over."

"Won't you read us some of your journal, Miss Zenobia?" asked Columba, from the chair into which she had languidly settled when she first entered the room.

"Why, certainly, Columba. I will read you, let me see—suppose we take May 26 of this year. It goes this way: 'Gwendolyn woke up at thirty-seven minutes past eight. She turned over in bed and asked what time it was. Upon being told, she yawned three times and turned over again. She got out of bed at three minutes past nine, put on her pink satin wrapper, and her maid brushed her hair. She remarked that her hair had commenced to fall out again. (Query: Can it be caused by the activity of her brain? Memorandum: To get her some hair tonic.)' That is my own private memorandum, Columba. I do not mean to publish that. I get all these particulars from her maid, you understand. She has orders to tell me everything. 'After completing her toilet and putting on her purple silk gown with the golden lions and the corresponding headdress, she said her prayers and came downstairs to the breakfast-room, where I awaited her. After saying good-morning to me, we sat down to breakfast. Gwendolyn was quiet as usual, only asking me for two more cups of coffee and complaining that the biscuits were burned (Memorandum: To speak to the cook about it), and I did not interrupt the meditations of genius. She ate a large saucer of dewberries with sugar, a bowl of oatmeal with cream and sugar, half a chicken, two helpings of Saratoga chips, four rice cakes and five biscuits with butter, and drank three cups of coffee and two glasses of water.'

"I think I should make a little explanation right there," said Miss Zenobia, pausing in her reading and looking up at her audience. "You see, when the inspiration of writing in costume first seized upon Gwendolyn she, of course, wanted to have her food correspond with her dress, and we

got some of those old cookbooks and tried to live just like the people did then. But we had any amount of trouble in getting the things to make the dishes out of, and half the time we couldn't, anyhow, and Gwendolyn didn't like to give up eating the things she was fond of; and, besides, it didn't agree with her; and so, when she commenced her second story and she found that she would have to give up her coffee because it had not been discovered then, she concluded she would have to go back to her old food. She says that, next to her costume, her coffee is the greatest aid to her wonderful brain. She always has a most excellent appetite when she is at work. Indeed, she has all the time, but it is better when she is working."

"Of course, that is perfectly natural, Miss Zenobia," remarked Horace, gravely. "If she did not eat anything she could not write at all. And so, in the ordinary course of things, as it takes some food for the poorest writer, it must take a large quantity for the greatest."

"Quite right, Mr. Layton. You explain it perfectly. But where was I reading? Oh, yes; here it is. 'After breakfast Gwendolyn observed that the weather was very warm, and after sitting on the veranda, deep in thought, for about half an hour, she remarked in a dissatisfied tone of voice that the house would soon have to be repainted, and that the last painter was a swindler; and, rising, she went slowly down the walk to the glade, where Parthenia and Cupid awaited her. As there was no combat in the chapter on which she was at work, the men had been excused for the morning. After some trouble in getting her writing-board adjusted exactly to suit her'—you know her maid holds a board for her to write on—'Gwendolyn picked up her pen and was about to commence, when Cupid presented her inkhorn at her left side, instead of her right, as repeatedly instructed. Instantly taking the ink from him

and placing it with her pen on the writing-board—note her care and promptitude in such matters—she laid him across her lap and gave him nine strokes with the palm of her hand, after which she commenced her daily task.'

"You see," said Miss Zenobia, interrupting herself again, "in those old times that Gwendolyn writes about, the people always used to whip their servants. She is ordinarily the mildest possible kind of a person; but when the inspiration of genius seizes her she is just bound to do as they did. She started to whip Parthenia with a switch; but she wouldn't stand it, even at double wages, and so she compromised on Cupid, and she pays his mother extra for the privilege of spanking him whenever she feels like it, which is generally several times a day. Gwendolyn says that it is the best possible preparation for her work, and whenever she can't seem to realize her characters she just gives it to Cupid, and the story comes out all right."

"That seems to be a most excellent incentive for the production of a work of genius," the attorney said, with a most judicial gravity of countenance. "I wonder that no author has ever thought about it before."

"It does seem strange," Miss Zenobia returned, placidly. "But Gwendolyn is continually remarking that inspirations which come to her naturally without any effort never seem to come to anybody else."

"It is rather hard on Cupid, though, isn't it?" Horace asked.

"What an absurd idea, Mr. Layton," Miss Zenobia exclaimed. "What does a few moments' pain to a little negro matter, compared with the production of an immortal work of genius? We sacrifice everything necessary on this place to Gwendolyn's work."

"Tell us something more about the costumes Gwendolyn

wears, Miss Zenobia," said Rosamond. "I wish she would dress up in some of them for us."

"She couldn't do that, Rosamond, because she never puts one on again after the story it was made for is finished. But I will gladly show you the costumes if you will come upstairs. As Gwendolyn and I have always gone abroad heretofore when she was not working on a story, I have never shown anyone my collection. You may come if you like, Mr. Layton; but I had rather show it to you and Mr. Elmore some other time, Columba."

"You see," Miss Zenobia continued, as they went into the hall and up the spacious stairway, "I have preserved everything in any way connected with Gwendolyn ever since she commenced to write. I value my collection at more than a hundred thousand dollars now, and it may be worth millions before it is completed. Of course, her original manuscripts are priceless, and I cannot show them to you because they are in the fireproof vaults which we had built under the house, and I only refer to them myself to settle some controverted point. Only the other day I received a letter from a literary society in Massachusetts, which is named after Gwendolyn, asking if a certain word in 'The River of Blood' was not a misprint. It was printed 'had,' but they thought it ought to be 'have.' But I looked up the manuscript, and sure enough 'had' was right, although Gwendolyn had changed it from 'have.' Of course, I generally keep all my treasures in the vaults, but while you are here, Gwendolyn and I thought we would risk the least valuable articles upstairs, so you could all see them. Will you please light the lamps, Mr. Layton?" she continued, as she unlocked a door and they entered the museum. "Gentlemen generally have matches."

"What is in this box, Miss Zenobia?" inquired Horace, after lighting the third standing lamp. He pointed to a

brass-bound mahogany box which lay on a table near him as he spoke.

"Why, I had no idea that they brought that up here!" exclaimed Miss Zenobia, in dismay. "It is entirely too precious to stay out of the vault all night. I must speak to Tom about that. It contains Gwendolyn's hair, Mr. Layton, all that she has lost during the past four years. Just think of it! Hair from the head that produced 'The River of Blood.' She has just arranged with her publishers to bring out an *edition de luxe* of all her works up to date. Each volume is to have Gwendolyn's portrait for a frontispiece, encircled by one of her hairs, and with her autograph certificate that it is genuine. It is to be called 'The Own Hair Edition,' and the publishers expect it to have a very large sale at a high price. Don't you think it's a splendid idea? Gwendolyn thought of it herself, and the publishers were wild about it."

"That certainly sounds like a good scheme," Horace remarked. "And the probability of its success goes to show how much more interest people nowadays take in literature than they used to. Then later on you can have an edition bound in pieces of her old clothes, called 'The Own Rags Edition.' And then you can get out 'The Own Toothbrush Edition,' and 'The Own Shoestring Edition,' and you are bound to 'own' that the possibilities are endless."

"They are indeed," returned Miss Zenobia, complacently. "And if they all sell even as well as her autograph edition did she will make any amount of money. I know, of course, that they will sell much better, because, if possible, Gwendolyn is more celebrated now than she was then; and, besides, it is such an original idea. There have been autograph editions before."

With your kind permission, my dear reader, we will leave Miss Zenobia to exhibit her treasures in the museum

and bid a final farewell to this chapter. To tell you the honest truth, I find the lady somewhat of a bore. She apparently has only one subject of conversation, and while many people can produce at least passable music from a hundred strings, yet only a master with a Cremona can perform such a feat on one. It is, of course, a fact that the progress of the world is entirely due to people with single ideas; but this idea must be other than hero worship. A great man might admire a dead genius, but he who bends the knee to a living paragon may, like Boswell, write a readable biography of his idol, but he can have no chance of doing anything to advance humanity on the road to wisdom or to happiness.

But do not for one instant suspect me of jealousy, because I tire of hearing Gwendolyn's praises sung by her maternal aunt. Gwendolyn stands pre-eminent in a class by herself; and, although the feeble tallow candle might strive to emulate the coal-oil lamp, yet it can never be accused of envying the glory of the rising sun.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE ART OF MAKING LOVE.

WHEN Miss Zenobia took Rosamond and Horace upstairs to inspect her collection, they left Columba and David alone in the library. It is true that Mr. and Mrs. Joyce were there when Miss Zenobia went to the desk to get her journal, but when she turned around they had vanished as suddenly as the image on the ground glass plate disappears when you press the bulb of the camera.

I wonder why it is that lovers, married or unmarried, have such a fondness for dark corners. Surely, discussions about the weather can be carried on as well, or better, in the light of day, or under the soft rays of the incandescent lamps than in the obscurity of the night when the dew is falling. But these couples somehow never seem to think so, and I will confess to you, kind reader, that in that day, or rather those nights, now, alas! long time past, I thought as they do.

We sat alone on a rustic bench, she and I, under the spreading branches of a great tree. The crescent moon peeped coyly down from among the summer clouds, and the drowsy hum of the cricket filled the listener with peace and quietude. From the depths of the shade the firefly flashed his welcoming signal to his mate, and the mockbird sang his love in joyous notes, each as pellucid and as pure as the pearls and the diamonds which fell from the lips of the maiden in the fairy tale. My love

was young and dainty and fair, and there on that bench, while we gazed unseeing on the entrancing scene and listened to the beauteous sounds we did not hear; there, I say, under that moon, did I tell her, in soft, low tones, of the conservation of energy and its bearings upon the nebular hypothesis.

Do you think I did? Well, I wonder. If you wish to know what we talked about you can get out on a bench in the shadow and talk it for yourself. They all say the same things, but I am not going to tell you what they are.

Well, as I remarked just now, before I meandered off to chatter about other lovers, David Elmore was left in the library with the woman whom he loved. It was the first time that he had been alone with Columba since she had broken her promise to go with him to the moonlight picnic. He had not stopped speaking to her when they met on the street, because he was too proud to show her how much he had been hurt, but he had carefully avoided her company, although it cut him to the heart to do so.

After the first few moments he had not been at all angry with Columba. If you really love a woman with your whole heart and soul, so that your love for her has entirely engulfed any love which you may have for yourself, you cannot possibly be angry with her for any length of time. David was very much hurt, it is true; but he did not think of blaming Columba for her rudeness. He believed that she was engaged to Dr. Houston, and he thought it extremely kind in her to nip his hopes in the bud, instead of allowing them to blossom with a fair prospect of producing fruit.

He now opened the conversation by blushing furiously, and for several minutes nothing else was said. This remark, however, was lost on Columba, because she was looking at the floor, and not at David.

It is a serious affliction for a man to possess such a thin skin. A woman may blush and be admired for it, but for a man to make his way through the world with any kind of ease and pleasure he should have an epidermis as thick as the hide of a rhinoceros.

Columba first fractured the silence in the library.

"I haven't seen you for such a long time, David," she said. "Are you so much in love with Rosamond that you haven't any time to see your other friends?"

"Why, really, Miss Columba, I—I'm not in love with Miss Rosamond."

"It's no use telling me that, David, because I know better. Everybody says so, and Rosamond thinks so, too, and she ought to know, because she has had so much experience."

"I'm not, though; I'm not. I think Miss Rosy is a charming nice girl, but I am not at all in love with her."

"If you are not in love with her, why is it that you never go to see any other girls? You haven't been to see me for six weeks."

"That is only because you don't want to see me, Miss Columba."

"I don't see why you should say that. I never told you so."

"If you wanted me to come to your house you wouldn't treat me so rudely."

"Why, I never was rude to you in my whole life, David. I do not understand. What do you mean?"

"You know very well that you broke your engagement to go with me to the moonlight picnic," said David, determinedly. "You promised to go with me, and you went off with Jim Houston."

"I didn't, David. I didn't. Dr. Houston asked me more than a week before you did."

"He could hardly have done that, because I asked you to go only a few minutes after they decided to have the picnic."

"Well, anyway, I had an engagement with him to go somewhere else that evening, and we just changed it to the picnic."

"But you promised to go with me."

"I didn't, David; I didn't. You never asked me to go, anyhow. I cannot see where you got such an idea."

Well, David Elmore was, and is yet, I hope, a perfect gentleman. He could not tell a young lady that she was saying the thing which is not, although he knew that she was; and, besides, it had required all the courage which he could command for him to say as much as he had. And, although the point-blank denial of a fact is only equal to about one-sixteenth part of an apology, yet David, being in love, was glad to accept even such a poor excuse as this for ending his variance from his sweetheart.

So David and Columba began to talk about indifferent subjects in a desultory fashion; and, as their conversation was much like other people's and not of any absorbing interest to us, we will leave them, if you please, and go to see if we cannot eavesdrop for awhile in the vicinity of the "greatest novelist of any age" and the proprietor of Cobbs' bookstore.

Herein lies the great advantage which stories possess over their counterparts in real life. When our friends bore us by their conversation we cannot tell them to shut up and go home, because you and I, reader, are gentlefolk, and we do not do such things. But if my characters do not please me I toss the marionettes into their box and take out some more which suit me better.

Similarly, fair maiden, when my prosing wearies you, if you happen to be alone, you frown, close the book with

a bang, and throw it across the room with the intention that it shall reach the corner and lie there in innocuous desuetude. But as a woman's throws are even more perplexing than a baseball pitcher's curves, it very naturally comes into contact with a handsome cut-glass vase filled with long-stemmed American Beauty roses which your fiancé has just sent you that very morning. And as these objects meet, of course there is a crash. But when Edgar comes in the evening, do you tell him that you broke it because you were angry with a poor author? Bless your dear little soul, no! You tell him that it broke when you were washing it, and how you cried over it, and will he ever forgive you; and you sob a little on his manly bosom, and he is enchanted and touched, and he sends you another twice as large the very next day.

Oh, I know you, like a book, young woman; or, rather, like a girl who is not in a book.

Gwendolyn and John wandered off to the spot where they had waited for dinner, and she established herself in the hammock. John looked with some apprehension at the supporting cords, which groaned and creaked under their weight of genius; but, seeing that they stoutly held their own, he drew up a chair and seated himself by her side.

Gwendolyn began to talk descriptions out of her novels.

"Behold yon perambulating moon," she said. "How gruesome is its ghastly face, shining with malevolent light like the face of a dead man. How many scenes of blood and carnage has it witnessed! How many murdered corpses with ghastly, upturned faces have lain under its baleful glare, corpse gazing upon corpse, until the mute horror of the scene has wrung shriek after shriek from the bated breath of the silent listener."

John was considerably puzzled, but he expected peculiarities, and he thought of the two hundred thousand dollars.

"That's so," he said, when Gwendolyn paused to take breath. "I say, Lady, ain't you ever thought about getting married?"

Gwendolyn's soul slowly ascended from the profound depths to which her eloquence had carried her.

"Have I ever thought about getting married, Mr. Cobbs?" she asked. "Why, of course I have. In my very last story, 'The Kiss of Death,' Hubert, the forester, marries the Countess Lucretia in the last chapter, after having slain all her other lovers. It turned out, of course, that he was the Duke of Beauseant, who had been deprived of his rightful inheritance by one of the men he killed. What a splendid idea," she continued, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm. "It just came to me while I was talking. That is the way my inspirations always come. Isn't it wonderful? In my very next story I will make the hero mortally wound all the unsuccessful suitors and then have a priest in and marry the heroine while they are all dying around and looking on in envy. It's the finest climax for a story that ever was, and it will make it sell like wildfire. It sustains the interest to the very last chapter. Have you got a pencil and paper, Mr. Cobbs? I must put it down right here now in the moonlight."

In searching his pockets, John discovered a pencil, but paper he had none.

"I ain't got no paper, Lady," he said. "But I reckon it will keep till morning, won't it?"

"How can you say such a thing, Mr. Cobbs?" returned the fair authoress reproachfully, rising from the hammock as she spoke. "Don't you know that the inspirations of genius never come twice, just as lightning never strikes twice in the same place? I must go up to the house to put it down at once."

Now, this did not suit John Cobbs at all, because he had

something to say which he was determined not to put off if he could help it; and so, as inspirations were the fashion, he had one of his own.

"Here, you can write it on my cuff, Lady," he said, taking off that article and removing the buttons. "That'll do as well as anything, I reckon."

"That is a brilliant idea," replied Gwendolyn, as she reseated herself, spread the cuff on her knee and began to scribble. "It will make a very valuable addition to my collection, and will show future generations how careful I have always been to preserve my inspirations at once."

"But, I say, Lady," said John, returning to the charge after Gwendolyn had finished writing, "you ain't answered my question. Ain't you ever thought about getting married yourself?"

"Why, I don't know that I have, much. Of course, a woman doesn't think about marrying until somebody asks her."

"But suppose there was a good-looking fellow in a good line of business that wanted to marry you. What would you say?"

"I couldn't very well tell without knowing who the man is."

"Why, it's me myself, Lady, of course. I want you to marry me."

Gwendolyn began to laugh.

"Well, Mr. Cobbs," she said; "is that your idea of the way to make love to a girl? I am afraid that you cannot expect to have much success, unless you learn to do it better than that."

"What's the matter with it?" John returned, somewhat sulkily. "Ain't I asked you right out? What do you want a fellow to do?"

"Why, every woman, of course, expects more romance

in a proposal than that, and if you had read my novels more carefully you would have found that out. I can teach you how to make love, if you like, so that you can ask the next girl in a better fashion."

John was inclined to rebel at first, because he had a natural objection to being laughed at, and he did not like anybody to offer to instruct him, just as if he didn't know everything that was worth knowing. But he thought of the house and the surrounding plantation, and the spirit of insubordination died within him.

"I don't want to marry nobody but you, Lady," he rejoined; "but I'll do what you say."

"Well, then, get down on your knees and take hold of my hand," said Gwendolyn, smiling, as she raised herself to a sitting position in the hammock.

John looked ruefully down at the damp ground and then at his new pair of light gray trousers.

"Grass mighty wet," he suggested.

Gwendolyn rose to her feet at once.

"I am afraid that you will not do at all, Mr. Cobbs," she said, scornfully. "A man who would not gladly sacrifice his clothes to his love is not fit to make a hero out of."

Whereupon she started to walk away towards the house.

"Oh, come back, Lady," he cried, entreatingly. "Come back. I'll do what you say."

"You promise to get down on your knees on the ground, do you?"

"All right. I'll put my handkerchief down. That'll keep my pants clean, I reckon."

"No, that will not do at all. You must kneel on the bare ground."

"All right, Lady; I'll do it. Just come back."

Gwendolyn returned slowly and seated herself in a chair. To tell the truth, she had no desire to break off the con-

versation, if she could succeed in forming her suitor according to her ideals. The scene would fit so well into her next story. In addition to this, although John was not as handsome as she could have wished and did not express his love as she would have expected, yet he was a man and it was her first proposal. She did not mind his precipitancy in asking such a question after an acquaintance of only two days. This, indeed, was the only point about him of which she fully approved, because love at first sight was a cardinal principle in her philosophy.

John sank slowly upon his knees by the side of Gwendolyn's chair, looking sadly down at the wet grass as he did so.

"You haven't taken my hand," said Gwendolyn, somewhat sharply.

"Excuse me, Lady," he returned, seizing the hand which lay on the chair-arm conveniently near him. "I forgot. What do I do next?"

"Now repeat after me: Gwendolyn, my soul's adored, I love you more than ever mortal loved before. The instant that I first beheld your fairy form my love gushed forth like water from the living rock. My love for thee is deeper far than ocean caves' profoundest gloom, and burns my soul with a fiery fire compared to which the desert sun at noonday is but a tallow dip. For you would I sacrifice my ancestral halls, mine honored name, dearer to me than life, my princely fortune, and even life itself. Name but your enemies, and I will bring their caitiff corpses and strew them at your feet. If you will be mine my ambient heart shall bound above the clouds, but if you deny my suit, on some forsaken isle will I prison me; and, foodless there, I will pine and die, and thoughts of thee shall cradle my departing spirit."

"Gewhillikins, Lady," John exclaimed, when the au-

thoress paused, "I can't remember all that, dashed if I can. Oh, I beg your pardon, but it slipped out accidental."

"Why, that's nothing to remember, Mr. Cobbs. If you listened carefully you can surely repeat it."

"I don't know what the first words was, Lady; let alone the whole biz. How did you start her off?"

"Why, it commences 'Gwendolyn, my soul's adored.' Surely you ought to be able to remember that. Come on and try now. 'Gwendolyn, my soul's adored.'"

After many repetitions and much prompting, John finally managed to repeat, a few words at a time, the above supposedly love-sick rhapsody, which indeed was taken *verbatim* from "The Kiss of Death."

The speech accomplished to its very last word, he heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Now it's done, Lady," he continued, eagerly, "what do you say?"

"I didn't say I was to say anything, Mr. Cobbs. I taught you that so you could propose to the next girl in a better fashion. Let go of my hand, please."

"Not much I won't until you say you'll marry me. I've done everything you asked and spoilt my pants, too. Come on now, Lady. You know you want to."

"This is perfectly absurd, Mr. Cobbs. I have not the slightest intention of marrying you or anybody else. I never expect to marry."

"Oh, come off, Lady. That's nonsense. Everybody gets married. And why won't you marry me? You can't do no better."

"Why, you have not even saved my life. I would never think of marrying a man who had not saved my life at least once."

This statement so astounded our persistent suitor that

he dropped the hand of his *inamorata* and sank back upon the grass, even oblivious of his pet trousers.

"Save your life, Lady!" he exclaimed. "How do you mean?"

"Why, you know very well that the hero always rescues the heroine from terrible danger at least a dozen times before she marries him, and you have never saved my life even once."

"But there ain't nothing to save you from."

"That is not my fault," returned Gwendolyn, rising as she spoke. "Come into the house, Mr. Cobbs. It is getting too damp for me out here. After you have saved my life at least once, you can ask me again, and if you do it better than you did this time I may—well, I don't know."

When Gwendolyn and John entered the library, to which the museum inspectors had also returned, Horace Layton quickly noticed the wet spots on the knees of John's trousers.

"Hello, Mr. Cobbs," he cried, making a bull's-eye shot without the remotest idea that his shaft of ridicule had even come near the target. "Been kneeling to Gwendolyn, have you? Don't you know, Man, that that method of proposing has entirely gone out of fashion? She will only laugh at you if you do it that way."

John muttered something about having slipped down on the wet grass and went upstairs to change his trousers and recover his equanimity. Although he had a most excellent opinion of his own worth, yet he speedily became angry if anyone attempted to make fun of him. It seemed to show that the person did not possess a proper appreciation of his merits; and, while it did not reduce his self-esteem in the slightest degree, nevertheless he hated the man who laughed at him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A CATASTROPHE.

JOHN had not the faintest idea of desisting from his attempt to win the hand and fortune of the authoress and heiress. Although he may not have known how to make love to a woman in the proper manner, yet he thoroughly understood that there are very few things in this world that a man cannot obtain, if he is fully determined to have them. Besides, he had a firm conviction that Gwendolyn was longing to say yes, and only wanted the proper amount of urging, so that it would not appear that she had come down too easily.

He thought that a man ought to humor a woman's whims before marriage—after that event, of course, it would be different—and, therefore, he set his wits to work to devise a plan by which he could appear to rescue Gwendolyn from some great danger.

After he retired to his room he thought and thought, but nothing appeared to be feasible. His invention was entirely at fault. He wished to ask Horace Layton's advice, because, although he knew that he could do anything better than anybody else, yet the conception of a scheme of this kind was more in the line of a lawyer than in that of a straightforward man of business. But he had not entirely forgiven Horace for the failure of his knightly escapade, and he was ashamed to ask his assistance; although, from his present knowledge of Gwendolyn, he had

begun to realize that possibly Horace's previous directions had not been so very unsound, although they had resulted so disastrously.

John finally went to bed with his problem still unsolved. He soon fell asleep, but the events of the evening and his nebulous project disturbed his rest, and a short time after he found himself sitting up in bed, the pistol from under his pillow in his hand, with a firm conviction that there was a burglar in the room. As soon as his senses returned, however, the moon, which was peeping through his open windows, informed him that he was mistaken, and he lay down and slept once more.

In thinking about his dream while dressing the next morning a brilliant idea came to him, which he at once resolved to put into execution. He determined to arrange an attempt to burglarize the house, and he expected to gain honor and renown by frustrating this attempt.

Although this might not exactly be considered as saving Gwendolyn's life, it would nevertheless prove to her what a brave man he was and how willing and anxious to encounter any danger for her sake, and it was really the only scheme which he was able to originate.

John was so full of his plan that he said scarcely anything at the breakfast-table. His distraction was unnoticed, however, because Miss Zenobia alone was fully competent to sustain the entire burden of the conversation, and, with the able assistants which she had on this occasion, the important question was not how a man could keep silent without remark, but how he could insert a small word edgeways in some crack in the discourse.

On a plea of very pressing business John had, before breakfast, requested a conveyance to town, and as soon as the meal was concluded he departed for Judithland in the Montmorency carriage, with the crest on the panels, and

with a memorandum of numerous little commissions for the ladies in his pocket.

He alighted at his store in the city; and, after attending to his commissions, like a man of business that he was, and procuring a five-pound box of Bylor's candies for his lady-love and a package of magazines for the household in general, he passed around to Elm street to transact the business which had brought him to town.

This took him to the shoe shop of "Jonh Jonhsin," where, as usual, that sable-hued gentleman was comfortably located in a rush-bottomed chair on the front gallery. John Cobbs had become well acquainted with this negro during his frequent visits to the blind tiger's lair since he located in Judithland.

After going through the usual ceremony and exchanging his dollar for a bottle full of whisky, he paused on the gallery outside to obtain the promise of the colored individual's co-operation in the plan which he had in view.

This he found to be far from easy. Although Johnson was a habitual violator of the prohibition laws, yet it was one thing to commit a misdemeanor, of which many white people in the county approved and also assisted in, and quite a different matter to be engaged in a felony, with a good chance of being shot into the bargain. He disliked exceedingly to refuse the request of one of his best customers, and he also wished to earn the five dollars offered, but this was a thing which he could not do.

It was in vain that John Cobbs assured him that it was only a joke which he wished to play on the ladies, and promised to increase the money to be paid. The man thought it would be as unpleasant to be shot in fun as in earnest, and steadfastly refused. Finally, however, when John offered to inform every person in the house, except

his hostess, of the fictitious nature of the assault, and also to double the money, he gave a reluctant consent.

Our bookseller at this time was not aware of the two large mastiffs which one of the colored men servants at Castle Montmorency loosed every evening after the family had retired and chained again in the early morning, and he assured his dark-skinned ally that no dogs were kept. He arranged that his burglar should enter the house through a certain window in one of the parlors, under which a flower-bed would plainly show his tracks, and he furnished the negro with a small saw to cut out some slats in the outside blinds. The window John agreed to unfasten.

After appointing the hour of one o'clock that night for the attempt, which, as the family retired about twelve, he thought would be sufficiently late, the courageous lover returned to the carriage, well pleased with the progress of his two-man-power conspiracy.

Dr. Houston came out to the house-party that evening; and, wonderful to relate, he arrived in time for dinner, in spite of the urgent demands of his patients. He was somewhat dissatisfied when he found that Columba and David were again on good terms; as, after the moonlight picnic, he believed from David's actions that she had finally dismissed him. To be sure, he had little fear of David as a rival; although he realized that he was a handsome young fellow, because in company he always saw David sit in silence or only answer when spoken to; and of course he was certain that a woman would not marry a man who could not say boo to a goose. He did not know that David shone more brightly when *tete-a-tete* with a girl.

After dinner the doctor tried to persuade Columba to wander off among the trees with him, under a pretence

of having something important to tell her; but she obstinately refused to leave the side of their hostess; and, as Gwendolyn also had no desire for private conversation that evening, the entire party established themselves on the front veranda, where they remained until they broke up for the night.

Columba did not volunteer a single remark to Dr. Houston during the evening, and indeed scarcely answered when he spoke to her. That gentleman, however, was used to her little ways, and bore her slights with the most perfect equanimity.

The only people in the world to whom she was at any time intentionally rude were the two men who loved her. She did occasionally say sharp things to other people, but this was caused by her chronic belief that she was unwell, and she was always sorry for it afterwards, and sometimes she tried to smooth it over if it was possible.

But, in general, she seized an opportunity to affront either of her lovers with avidity, and no one could possibly tell that the faintest trace of remorse for this conduct ever entered her bosom.

To Dr. Houston, however, she was frequently kind, going out with him when invited and requesting little favors from him; and, although she always vowed and declared that she never intended to marry him, yet her conduct quite often was such as to give a sanguine man every reason for asking her again.

On the other hand, as I have mentioned before, she very seldom treated David with ordinary politeness, and the moonlight picnic of unpleasant memory was the only occasion when she had consented to go anywhere with him for more than a year past.

John did not desire to be alone with Gwendolyn, either, as he wished to accomplish his plot before pressing his

suit to the authoress. His only desire was to get the party off to bed as soon as possible, and he made several remarks with this object in view, which resulted in a good deal of laughter at his expense.

Miss Zenobia, who generally suggested retiring at about twelve o'clock, had gone to her room with a headache, and Horace Layton and Dr. Houston had been amusing the ladies with ghost stories, of which each had a considerable supply. Of course, these were very interesting, but such stories have a natural tendency to make girls prefer company to the solitude of their own apartments, and it was quite one o'clock before they finally separated.

Gwendolyn had been unusually silent during the latter part of the evening. Ghost stories were not in her line. She understood how to make ghosts in her fiction extremely well, but after her facile pen had separated the spirit from its tenement of clay, she took much more interest in the corpse than in the disembodied shade. Besides, her fancies were too valuable to be thrown away. When you can obtain a dollar a word for the product of your imagination, you cannot afford to bestow a few thousand words, even to amuse your guests.

John was exceedingly impatient, and he bounced up and down in his chair and interrupted the tales of the apparitions until he really made himself a nuisance. If he had only realized it, this was the worst course for him to pursue; because when young men commence to relate such stories they naturally desire to dispose of all their stock, and the more frequent the interruptions the longer it takes.

About a quarter to one our fidgety plotter walked down to the gate of the home inclosure, under a pretence of requiring exercise, but with the hope that he might be able to see his negro assistant and instruct him to delay his

enterprise. But from the gate no darky was visible in the moonlight; and, after watching for some ten minutes, John suddenly turned and hurried back, under the stimulus of the fear that someone else might close the parlor windows.

He found the party just breaking up; and, after he had volunteered to shut these windows, in order to leave one unfastened, he could only sit in his room and hope that his man would have sense enough to wait a sufficient time to allow the household to fall asleep.

For when he promised to tell the other men about his project John did not intend to keep his word. He thought they probably would not approve of a joke of this kind; and, anyway, he was sure they would tell Gwendolyn about his scheme in order to laugh at him. And now that one o'clock had come and gone, with the men still awake, he was afraid that they might hear his burglar, deprive him of, or at any rate share with him, the honor of protecting the hostess, and very possibly change a comedy into a tragedy.

As the hands of his watch went slowly round, however, he realized that his anxiety was groundless. His last instruction to Johnson had been to come under his window before making the attempt to enter, so that he could be prepared to repel the invader; but, looking out into the moonlight, he only saw the park silent and deserted.

When two o'clock arrived John began to get impatient. He never was the most lamblike of men, and this dashed nigger had now kept him waiting for more than an hour. He fumed internally, but there was no one on whom he could vent his rage.

At about half-past two, as there was still no appearance of his assistant, he resolved to execute his design alone; and, removing his shoes, he cautiously opened the door of

his room and listened. The house was silent as a church on Monday. He thought he would steal downstairs, open the parlor window, make a few tracks in the flower-bed outside, and then clamber back, fire his pistol, and claim the glory of a combat with a marauder of the night.

The enterprise seemed a simple one, easily to be executed, and promised much renown from a slight expenditure of time and energy. It is true that the house was entirely unlighted, but it was built by a simple plan, and the passages and stairs were amply wide.

John Cobbs moved softly, stealthily, scarcely allowing himself to breathe, through the blackness of darkness towards his destination. After much groping and several narrow escapes from stumbling over chairs, he attained the head of the stairs, which he commenced to descend with more confidence, inwardly congratulating himself that his troubles were at an end. But he did not understand that the deity who is worshipped in the Temple of Fortune is a woman.

On the fourth step his stockinged foot came in contact with an object which at first felt like a sofa pillow, but which instantly resolved itself into a circular saw, and every member of the household was awakened by a scream of rage and pain, followed almost instantly by a pistol-shot and the sound of some heavy body falling down the front stairs.

The male guests soon appeared with a light, armed as circumstances would permit, and in a very pronounced state of *deshabille,* and they found John Cobbs just coming to his senses at the foot of the stairs, while Miss Zenobia's darling cat, with a terror-stricken expression on its countenance, was frantically endeavoring to discover an avenue of escape from the house.

After lifting their prostrate friend upon a lounge in

the hall, staunching the blood from a slight cut, and ascertaining that his injuries were not serious, the innate modesty of my characters prevailed over their curiosity, and they retired in haste to their rooms to obtain clothing better suited to welcome the ladies, whom they momentarily expected to arrive upon the scene.

But they did not know the dear creatures.

When the cat's unearthly yell first awakened them from their innocent slumbers, each young woman covered up her head like an ostrich, with a trembling fear that every ghost from the depth of the Red Sea was in her room, willing, and even anxious, to devour her. And in this posture they remained until the repeated assurances of the various gentlemen through the doors of their rooms, that the danger was passed, finally induced them to come downstairs. They came together for better protection, and arrived when Dr. Houston was just finishing the bandage on John's sprained ankle after attending to the cut on his head, it having been decided that he could comfortably spend the hours until morning on the lounge.

Please notice that I am every bit as proper as the gifted authoress of a certain popular novel, who takes so much pains to convince you that a brave man and a fair woman were conventionally attired when he rescues her in the small hours of the morning, that she entirely destroys the terror of her crazy woman's attack by informing the reader of it many pages in advance. This may be good form, but is not art. Far better would it have been for the peril to have come unheralded, and for the authoress to allow her characters to preserve their own propriety, or even temporarily to forego it, as they would have done had they been real and life in danger.

But, poor me, I have neither the desire nor the ability to harrow my gentle readers' feelings; and, as there never

was any danger except to John Cobbs and the cat, there is no reason why my puppets should not be properly dressed when they come on the stage.

John had been partially stunned by his fall; and, after he came to his senses, he obstinately refused to answer questions in regard to his accident, which caused Dr. Houston to think him worse hurt than he was. But, after the doctor had given him a strong stimulant out of his traveling medicine-chest, from which he never parted, John began sulkily to defend himself.

"But I don't exactly understand," Horace was saying, when Gwendolyn and the other ladies reached the foot of the stairs. "Did you say you saw the burglar yourself?"

"I told you I did. I ain't going to keep telling you all night. I was woke up by a noise and I grabbed my gun and jumped to the window, and I saw a big nigger just getting in down here, and I run to the stairs to head him off, and I stepped on that dashed cat and pitched all the way to the bottom, and the row I made must have scared the nigger off."

"But all the windows in both parlors are down and the shutters closed," objected Horace, who had been investigating while Dr. Houston was attending to his patient.

"He must have shut them before he got out," returned John, shortly. "I saw him come in, anyway."

"He couldn't have shut them before he got out," chimed in Dr. Houston, as he straightened himself up, after completing his bandage. "And the parlor windows are too high to be shut from the ground, even if the man wasn't scared to death by the racket you made."

John had no answers ready for arguments, so he fell back on the point-blank statement:

"I saw him, anyway."

Like all women, Gwendolyn was, of course, ready to believe in robbers on the slightest provocation, but as she saw that the other men were so plainly incredulous the maidenly desire to tease her lover overcame even her faith in burglars.

"Why, Mr. Cobbs," she said, "both the dogs are on the front gallery. I hear them out there now. Surely they would have caught any man who tried to get into the house."

"I tell you I saw him, Lady," said John, angrily. "I saw him as plain as I see you now."

David Elmore had been upstairs to John's room, and here he returned with a couple of pillows.

"Look here, Mr. Cobbs," he said, "don't you go to bed at night? Your bed is still made up."

"And, bless my boots," broke in Horace, laughing. "Funny we didn't notice it before. Say, man, are you in the habit of dressing yourself all over and putting on your collar and cravat before you rescue fair damsels from burglars? Of course, it is much more proper to be correctly attired when you come into the presence of ladies, but if the robbers had carried off your lady-love while you were making your toilet you might just as well have stayed in your room."

This sally caused a general laugh, and John turned his face to the wall and obstinately refused to utter another word.

Now, Mrs. Joyce, having been recently married, naturally was interested in other lovers, and as her instinct had previously informed her that John was a suitor for Gwendolyn's hand, she began at once to defend him as well as she was able.

"Never mind, Mr. Cobbs," she said, soothingly. "These

people will laugh at anything. You drove the robber off anyhow, if you didn't catch him."

"This is a most peculiar case," said Horace. "We need the ingenuity of a Sherlock Holmes to solve it. I think Mr. Cobbs must have made up his bed after he dressed, just like the burglar shut the window and shutters before he got out, for the purpose of throwing the detectives off the scent. Or, possibly, the innate neatness of his nature would not allow him to leave his bedclothes mussed up when he left the room, and the amiable burglar was afraid that we might catch cold if he left the window open."

"What nonsense you do talk," said Rosamond. "It is simple enough. You remember how sleepy Mr. Cobbs was last night, don't you? Well, he must have gone to sleep in his chair and never gone to bed at all."

"And then he was all ready to fight the burglar when he came?" Mrs. Joyce continued.

"Anyhow, he drove him away while you other gentlemen were asleep," Columba added.

"My dear young ladies," Horace responded, "in me you see before you a second edition of the great detective, and with the true instinct of genius I have kept the final revelation until the last chapter. But now listen. There was no burglar!"

"How do you know, Mr. Layton?" Rosamond asked, quickly. "You were asleep when he came."

"That is entirely true, Miss Rosy. I was slumbering peacefully when he didn't come. But now mark my great detective skill. I made an investigation while the doctor was tending his interesting patient. Every window in both parlors, except one, is fastened on the inside. No burglar could have fastened them had he been ever so much inclined. Now, right under the unfastened window

a newly-cultivated flower-bed reposes peacefully in the moonlight. Unless the burglar possessed wings, which the great majority of burglars do not, he must have left tracks on this bed, even if he carried off the ladder with which he ascended. But, mark! There are no tracks! And, furthermore, on the walk near by there lies a great dog, who growled at me when I opened the window, and with wonderful presence of mind I refrained from pursuing my investigations any farther. I did not desire to tempt him to break his fast so early, because it is always unwholesome for people to eat at this time of the morning. I was sure I would not agree with him, anyhow, for you know I make my living by opposing people, and Miss Rosamond is continually informing me how disagreeable I am. And, taking all these things into consideration, it did not seem to me that it would be a proper return for Lady Gwendolyn's kindness if I gave her pet dog indigestion."

"Don't you think the dog might have swallowed the burglar, tracks and all?" asked Mr. Joyce.

"Possibly he did," Horace returned. "He's big enough. But my discoveries stopped before I reached his interior."

"The whole matter is easy enough to explain," said Dr. Houston, positively. "Mr. Cobbs went to sleep in his chair and dreamed about a burglar and fell downstairs before he woke up. It frequently happens that people who go to sleep in constrained positions have bad dreams."

"And, anyway, Lady Gwendolyn," Horace added, "you have the satisfaction of knowing that Mr. Cobbs is so willing to shed his heart's blood for your protection that he even fights for you in his sleep."

Miss Zenobia came downstairs during the progress of this conversation and David imparted the main facts of the accident to her in an undertone. She now interposed:

"Young people," she said, "it is time you were all back in bed. I cannot have my girls kept up all night. Can't you get Mr. Cobbs upstairs, Dr. Houston?"

"I think that he is best left here until morning, Miss Zenobia. I have not been able to discover any internal injuries as yet, but that contusion on the cranium seems to have caused a slightly comatose condition. I will come down every hour or two and attend to his bandages and see how he is. I really do not think that he is seriously hurt, though."

If Dr. Houston had been able to examine the interior of John Cobbs' "cranium" during the progress of the above conversation in the same manner that the novelist can, he would have been more than ever of the opinion that his patient was not seriously hurt.

It required all his will-power for John to restrain himself from giving the men a good "cussing out," and only the certainty that such a course would forever destroy his chances of obtaining Gwendolyn's fortune, and also the knowledge that he was in no condition for a rough-and-tumble combat, prevented him from doing so. But as long as he could not say what he wished he did not say anything after his first attempt at defense, and his sulky silence caused the doctor to fear that he was more severely injured than he was.

After the ladies retired upstairs Dr. Houston gave his patient an opiate; which, to me, does not seem to be indicated by his supposed condition, but which so many doctors are fond of administering on the slightest provocation, and soon his anger, his mortification and his hopes passed away into the oblivion of unconsciousness.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A DINNER CONVERSATION.

JOHN came to his senses about twelve o'clock; and, finding himself on the lounge in the lower hall, with Miss Zenobia placidly reading near him, it was some minutes before he could remember the circumstances which had left him there. But when the recollection of his unfortunate adventure came to the surface, his anger at the people who laughed at him also arose, and he started up from his couch with the intention of leaving instantly for town. Pain in his injured ankle, however, and the dizzy after effects of morphine soon convinced him that this was impossible without assistance, and he sank helplessly back again.

Miss Zenobia, who was reading "The River of Blood" for the seventy-second time, sent for Dr. Houston from the billiard-room as soon as she saw that John was awake, and the doctor, with the assistance of one of the negro men servants, helped him to return to his room and to make his toilet.

This accomplished, and his breakfast disposed of, all the solicitations of Gwendolyn and her aunt could not dissuade John from returning at once to Judithland, for which place he accordingly departed in Gwendolyn's carriage, with the doctor in attendance.

A decided objection to being laughed at was one of the

motives which caused John to leave. He also knew that he could not stand ridicule without displaying his temper, and he had long ago acquired sufficient policy to keep out of the way of people with whom he was angry, when it was to his interest to do so. Besides, as Dr. Houston assured him that it might be two weeks before he could walk without a crutch, he could not bear the idea of being near Gwendolyn and unable to follow her around and to do things for her, and therefore he preferred to recover from his hurt in town.

If John had only known it he could have made much more progress in Gwendolyn's affections by spending two weeks at her house as an interesting invalid than in any other way which he could devise. From the long inheritance of centuries, when it was man's pleasure to inflict wounds and woman's business to heal them, the female of our race has acquired an interest in sickness and a skill in aiding the suffering to which the male is a stranger.

Besides, there is the natural tendency to love where we can aid. As a rule, a man does not think he loves a woman unless he believes himself bodily or mentally stronger than she and able to care for her. And when the more vigorous sex is, temporarily, in a helpless condition, the same feeling is apt to react upon the weaker.

But for a man to pose as an interesting invalid he must possess the virtue of patience, and as this was foreign to John Cobbs' nature, he probably did the sensible thing when he departed for Judithland.

Gwendolyn had planned a fishing party to amuse her guests on the following day; and, although Mr. Cobbs' accident had deprived her of one of her men, yet by dint of much entreaty she had persuaded Dr. Houston to take his place. You know that at least an equal number of men are as necessary on a fish-fry as they are at a dance.

How can you expect the dear girls to bait their own hooks, or to remove the cold, little, wriggling, clammy fish—if they happen to catch any?

Do not think that Dr. Houston objected to the fishing excursion from disinclination, because wherever Columba went was the place where he wished to go. Indeed, he made up his mind to accompany them from the very first, but a young doctor, in whose care is placed the arbitrament between life and death, cannot leave his patients in other, presumably less skillful hands, even for a day, without very careful consideration.

It was really strange that Dr. Houston's patients should be taken desperately ill so frequently when he happened to be at church or some other public gathering. He never went to the theater without being called out during the performance, while Dr. Chester, who had the largest practice in Judithland, would sit calmly out the entire five acts. Whenever he went driving with Columba he always stopped at his drugstore to ascertain if he had any calls, and several times he left her sitting in his buggy while he made a very urgent visit. She was not altogether pleased by this latter performance, but she was immensely impressed with the importance of his practice, for it must be confessed that Columba's intellectual faculties had barely sufficient weight to counterbalance three rose petals and a dewdrop.

However, our progressive physician finally decided to leave his patients under the care of another young doctor for a night and a day; and, having arranged with his drugstore to telephone any important calls to Castle Montmorency, where his horse was to be kept hitched to his buggy, with a man in readiness to drive at speed to the lake for him, he was justified in feeling reasonably free from anxiety in regard to his practice.

As the time which he could devote to his other patients after leaving John Cobbs at his boarding-house would be so short, he had asked Gwendolyn not to expect him at dinner, and he told her that it probably would be late at night before he could return with her carriage to Castle Montmorency. Thus it was a little surprise when he came into the dining-room while the soup plates were being removed.

"I am so glad that you were able to come out in time for dinner, Doctor," said Gwendolyn, cordially. "Tom, bring Dr. Houston a plate of soup. We'll take pleasure in waiting for you, Doctor."

"Never mind the soup, Lady Gwendolyn," the physician replied. "I can do very well without it. I couldn't think of keeping you all waiting."

But, nevertheless, the doctor plunged into the soup, or rather plunged the soup into the doctor, with considerable avidity as soon as it arrived. He was not one of your weaklings who can make a full meal upon a sparrow's wing.

"I am so glad that you were able to come out," said Gwendolyn again. "We would have waited for you if you had thought to telephone."

"Why, I didn't know that I could come until it was so late that I did not like to telephone, for fear of keeping your dinner waiting too long. You know anything will do for me. A doctor gets used to taking his meals whenever he can get them. But Cato made such good time coming out that I got here sooner than I expected. For a wonder, I didn't have a single call at Wood's all day. I don't know when such a thing has happened before. Judithland is getting distressingly healthy. And my last patient, little Sammy Strong, didn't keep me near as long as I expected."

"How is Sammy, anyhow?" Rosamond inquired. "I saw Mrs. Strong Sunday evening, and she was awfully worried about him. She said you looked so grave and came to see him so often that she was dreadfully alarmed, and she was afraid that he was worse than you would say."

The doctor looked exceedingly serious at once, and answered in a solemn tone which Rhadamanthus might have envied:

"Of course, I tried to keep it from Mrs. Strong," he said. "But he was a mighty sick boy on Sunday, and I was very much afraid that I would not be able to pull him through. People generally do not realize what a serious disease *morbilli* is. Mrs. Strong foolishly thought she could treat him herself and did not send for me soon enough, and I was very uneasy about him for a few days. But my medicines took right hold, and I found him so much better this afternoon that I think I will be able to leave him to Dr. Dosier to-morrow without much danger."

Now, really, reader, measles in its lighter form is not a very dangerous disease, and I do not blame Mrs. Strong for trying to treat it herself. But if you happen to study medicine, remember that the first thing for you to learn is that all your patients must be violently ill—if they are able to settle their bills. There is no possession which is worth one-half so much to a young physician as a solemn countenance; not in the sick room, mark you, but as soon as the distressed relative follows him across the threshold of the door. It brings in even more money than a carriage and pair, although the latter sometimes presses it hard.

If the banker's toe aches, never suggest a corn. Such an idea would be utterly despicable. No, gout is the correct term, and this will compliment the banker, make him

think himself an aristocratic rarity, and form a most excellent peg to hang a bill upon.

By thus magnifying the danger you increase your reputation by the cure; and, if anything should happen, it is an unfortunate visitation of Providence which human skill could not avert. Besides, a serious illness requires many more visits than a slight one, and at two dollars and a half each this is not a consideration to be neglected.

Dr. Houston talked for some little time longer about his other patients and the pains which he had taken to instruct Dr. Dosier how to treat them on the next day. He made plain the tremendous risk which he ran by leaving them, which, of course, he considered a great compliment to his hostess.

Horace Layton interrupted him.

"Look here, Jim," he said, "you're leaving out the only important part. Don't you see how Lady Gwendolyn is longing for information about the beloved one's condition, while you are going on about other sick people, but she is too modest to ask you. You ought to know that the heroine is always plunged into an abyss of grief when the hero is wounded and far away."

Now as Gwendolyn, of course, did not care a straw for John Cobbs, she naturally was delighted to be teased about him.

"Oh, please don't, Mr. Layton," she said, smiling. "I may break down right here now. Don't you see how crimson my eyes are? I have been weeping over the poor, dear creature's accident all day long."

"Why, you haven't, Gwendolyn," Columba burst out in amazement. "You haven't. I've been with you all day and you haven't cried once."

"Columba don't understand how a girl can shed tears

in her heart while she smiles with her lips," said Rosamond, smiling also. "A girl has to be awfully in love before she can realize that."

"When Mr. Joyce was sick, just before we were engaged," Mrs. Joyce observed, "I cried all night long. I didn't expect to marry him then, either."

"Why, you never told me anything about that, Katie," Mr. Joyce exclaimed.

" 'Course I didn't," she responded, pertly. "I didn't tell you everything then. Men are too conceited to live, anyhow."

"Why, look here, Mrs. Joyce," Horace said. "If you didn't want to make Mr. Joyce conceited you ought never to have married him. That was the very worst thing in the world to give him an overwhelming opinion of himself."

Mrs. Joyce answered Horace, but she looked at her husband.

"Well, I know, Mr. Layton," she said. "But I am afraid it can't be helped now. Anyhow, I never will do it again."

"I don't wish to change an interesting subject," observed the lawyer. "It always makes an old bachelor feel particularly comfortable when he hears these little matrimonial infelicities. But, really, Lady Gwendolyn is just dying to hear from her lover, and it isn't at all right for us to keep her waiting. Tell us about it, Jim. How did Mr. Cobbs stand the trip to town?"

"Oh, he was sulky and mad all the way in. Never said a word to me, but every time the carriage would jolt he would let out a big cuss word until the air actually got blue. That contusion on his cranium is a very serious affair, and there is a severe lesion of the tendon of Achilles. It may take me several weeks to get him well again."

"And what will poor Lady Gwendolyn do in the mean-

time?" said Horace, sympathetically. "I'll bet ten to one she loses twenty pounds."

"Oh, I can't possibly survive it, Mr. Layton," Gwendolyn rejoined. "I shall certainly pine away and die disconsolately."

"You don't mean to say you care anything for that fellow!" Columba exclaimed. "Why, he's red-headed, and freckle-faced, and——"

"Don't mind what she says, Lady Gwendolyn," Horace interrupted. "She is very evidently jealous. She seems to think that any man whom she has not monopolized is not worth having. I have an indistinct recollection of hearing once about a fox who entertained a similar idea in regard to some grapes."

"A fox, Mr. Layton!" Columba returned, scornfully. "A fox! I don't see any connection between Mr. Cobbs and a fox."

"Oh, that's easy, Miss Columba," said Dr. Houston, with a laugh. "He only means that Cobbs' hair is red, just like a fox's."

"No, that's not it," Mr. Joyce interjected. "He means that Mr. Cobbs is such a high-flyer that it makes him look green."

"His hair isn't red," Gwendolyn protested. "It's the same beautiful auburn that Titian painted."

"Well, you know red and green make a splendid contrast," Rosamond chimed in. "If Mr. Cobbs is green and his hair and face red, it makes his general color scheme perfect."

"Why, Miss Rosamond," said Horace. "I am surprised at you. I never would have suspected you of jealousy. I thought you only wanted one man at a time, and surely you ought not to want to change so very soon. Give the present incumbent a little time to get used to it, please.

Do you know that is why they call jealousy the 'green-eyed monster.' It is because it makes the grapes which hang high always look sour. I did not anticipate anything better from Miss Columba, but I really did not expect you to begrudge Lady Gwendolyn her poor little lamb."

"I wish you would talk something somebody could understand, Mr. Layton," Columba broke in. "Here you are going on about foxes, and grapes, and lambs, and Mr. Cobbs until I can't make out anything you say."

"Well, anyhow, Miss Columba," Horace replied, "you can understand that Mr. Cobbs is not green, except when he kneels down to make love to Lady Gwendolyn."

"If it pleases me, Mr. Layton," Gwendolyn retorted, "I don't see why you should object."

"Wasn't that the way our ancestors—" David began, when Columba interrupted him.

"What do you know about it, David?" she said, quickly. "You never made love to anybody."

"You do not know Mr. Elmore," Rosamond rejoined. "He has had a lot more experience in that direction than you know anything about. What did you start to say, Mr. Elmore?"

"I was only going to say that I thought the old custom where the man bowed down and worshipped the woman he loved was such a beautiful one. We are getting entirely too matter-of-fact nowadays."

"It was romantic, all right," said Horace. "But it unfortunately used to happen in those good old days, that, after the man had married his idol, if she did anything that did not please him, he took a stick to her. We don't kneel down to ask the girls to marry us now, but we don't beat our wives, either. At least I don't think we do, but as I have never been married, I do not positively know.

How is it, Mrs. Joyce? Has Mr. Joyce taken a switch to you yet?"

"Not very often, Mr. Layton," replied Mrs. Joyce, smiling fondly at her husband.

"She needs it sometimes," Mr. Joyce observed, smiling back at his wife, "but I thought I would wait until the honeymoon was over."

"That reminds me of a funny thing that happened to me once," said Dr. Houston. "I was going home one evening about sundown, when I heard a woman screaming in a negro shanty as if she was being murdered. Of course, I couldn't let anything of that kind be done, so I just kicked the door open and rushed in; and there was a big six-foot negro woman tied to the bedpost and a little man was lamming her with a strap, and she was howling like everything. Well, I was a good deal of an athlete in those days and rather proud of my strength, so I just knocked the man down and he lay in the corner half-stunned. I cut the woman down and, like a fool, I thought she would be grateful; but she turned on me and abused me for everything bad she could think of. Well, I naturally backed out, seeing I wasn't wanted; but she followed me out of the door, getting more and more violent, and finally she actually knocked me into the gutter. It was dry, and I wasn't hurt at all; in fact, I wouldn't have fallen if I hadn't backed into it; so I just sat there to see what she would do. Well, she ran over to where her husband was coming to himself, and picked him up and put him in a chair, and when I came away I'm blessed if he wasn't tying her to the bedpost again. Funny, wasn't it? She really seemed to enjoy being whipped."

"I think I can explain the psychological reaction," said Horace. "Like all women, she wanted to think that her husband was the greatest man in the world, and as she

was so much the larger, the only way she could fully appreciate it was for her to let him beat her."

Dr. Houston had finished his soup by this time, and the arrival of fish from the kitchen in the yard interrupted the progress of the conversation and this chapter. I do not altogether approve of reporting table talk, anyhow. An autocrat may sometimes lecture at the breakfast-table; but, with a working audience at a boarding-house, he must do it at the expense of his own nourishment; and, personally, I could not afford to be deprived of this, even if I had any qualifications for a lecturer, which I have not.

But the discourse of ordinary mortals at meals is entirely too fragmentary and interspersed with too many questions and answers bearing solely upon the business in hand to be worth printing *verbatim* in the poorest book. Wherefore, if you please, we will allow our friends to finish dinner by themselves and send them speedily to bed, so that they may not be too sulky from lack of sleep when we arouse them for the fishing excursion early to-morrow morning.

Because Miss Zenobia was not heard from at the dinner-table you must not think that she was suddenly stricken dumb. Indeed, she was talking most of the time, to David Elmore, principally; but, you see, I don't tell everything.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FISHING AND FUSSING.

THE clock struck four the next morning when Gwendolyn and her guests were gathered around the breakfast-table, where Miss Zenobia was pouring out hot coffee. Nothing could have induced that lady to start off on a pleasure excursion at such an unreasonable hour, especially as Mr. and Mrs. Joyce were going to chaperone the party. She thought with much complacency of the delicious nap which she would take after her young friends had departed on their wild fish chase.

Strange to say, Lady Gwendolyn had never been fishing in all her life. In her childhood, before her father's death, she had been entirely under the care of her aunt, who was always unwilling to permit her charge to go near so dangerous a place as a lake; although Cato, their colored coachman, would have been delighted to accompany her. During her hotel life in Europe she had no opportunity in which to learn the fascination of the bobbing cork, and her previous visits to her country mansion had been for work and not for play.

Horace Layton suggested the fish-fry to her, and proposed the early rising in order to greet the fish when their appetites were still unsatisfied. This idea pleased Gwendolyn immensely when it was first advanced. It would be so romantic to start off in the darkness, just as if they

were bound on some marauding expedition. She frequently aroused the characters in her novels at such early hours, but she herself had never witnessed a sunrise, and she anticipated much enjoyment, and also profit, from the experience.

All this, remember, was on the days preceding. But when Parthenia, her maid, awakened her at half-past three she felt as if she had just fallen asleep, and only the courtesy which she owed as a hostess prevailed on her to dress and come downstairs. She arrived at the breakfast-table in a very sulky mood, and as the other members of the company were in a similar mental condition the commencement of the pleasure excursion bore more resemblance to a funeral than it did to a wedding.

However, the coffee revived them somewhat; the gentlemen assumed a forced gayety, to show that sleep was of no consequence to them, and thus they climbed into their wagon with some semblance of mirth. The moon had just descended to her diurnal couch under the western horizon, and old Sol was beginning to turn over in bed, and to think about arising to make things warm for the inhabitants of this terraqueous sphere. And as their great oppressors were absent, the little stars were striving to prove that they were competent to enlighten our world, as well as the million other globes scattered throughout infinite space.

There can be only one correct way to go to a fish-fry. You must have a plantation wagon, drawn by four good mules, and the company must be seated on mattresses in the bottom. It is absolutely essential that the wagon should have no springs.

The only chance of success possessed by a picnic of this kind will be found to consist in its entire informality. If you start the day reclining with dignity upon the soft

cushions of a luxurious carriage, or even sitting bolt upright on a rush-bottom chair in a farm wagon, you are apt to continue as you began, and your hopes of happiness are not likely to be realized. To be sure, in the latter case you may be tilted out of the wagon in a bad place in the road, which would effectually eliminate the starch from your would-be merry-makers. But for such a blessing as this you must depend entirely upon luck, and Dame Fortune is too fickle a lady for you to base your prospects for a day's pleasure on her decrees.

But start off your party in the early morning after a liberal dose of good hot coffee, place them on the floor of a country wagon over a rough road, and if they have any merriment in them it will certainly be jolted to the surface.

Gwendolyn did not understand this essential ingredient of her excursion. The only young people with whom she was familiar had grown gray and died some hundred years before. But her legal adviser possessed much experience on the subject, and he advocated the wagon so strongly that she abandoned her original idea of the carriage and a hack from town.

The mule-bells tinkled musically as their well-kept wearers briskly trotted along the four miles of country road which forms the connecting link between Castle Montmorency and Frye's Lake, to which our party of pleasure-seekers was bound.

This lake, with a name so suggestive of the ultimate destination of its inhabitants, is a pleasant locality during the summer months, and is much visited by the youth of Judithland. In no place more than a hundred yards wide, it is nearly a mile in length, and it abounds in perch and bass. Its banks are lined with stately cypress trees, which, projecting far out over the water, form a grateful shade from the rays of the summer sun. Near the landing where

the boats are kept the enterprising fishermen of the city have built a two-room cottage, to which the ladies may retire when their womanly instinct urges them to rearrange their disheveled tresses or dab some powder on a nose which blushes crimson still at the remembrance of the recent kiss of the orb of day.

The house and the boats were in the care of an old negro man who lived in the neighborhood, and who also furnished bait to fishing parties. He was waiting at the landing when our friends drove up and alighted.

It so happened that there were only three boats at the landing, each being supplied with minnows and fishing tackle. They were flat-bottomed craft with square ends, intended for propulsion by paddles, and having wells in their centers with holes bored in the bottom to preserve the fish alive. Two of the boats were designed to accommodate two persons each, one at either end; while the third was large enough to hold four or five without discomfort.

With his usual bad luck, David had been sitting on the side of the wagon opposite to the landing, which deprived him of the opportunity of assisting the ladies to alight; but this enabled him first to notice the number and size of the boats provided.

He had made up his mind that he would overcome his constitutional timidity and try to please Columba as almost any other man would do, and for the last two days she had been somewhat gracious to him.

"Oh, Miss Columba," he said, as soon as he jumped over the side of the wagon, "won't you go out in a boat with me?"

Columba was just about to consent, when Dr. Houston, who had assisted her to alight from the wagon, interrupted her.

"I am very sorry, Dave," he said, taking her arm as he

spoke, "but Miss Columba promised to go out with me half an hour ago."

"I didn't, Dr. Houston," she began; but how can a girl do anything to resist a man of that kind? Before the words were well out of her mouth he had placed her in the best small boat and pushed off with her from the landing. It is very difficult for a young woman to make up her mind, and a man who acts promptly can easily cause her to do things which she has no intention of doing.

As David turned disconcerted from seeing his sweetheart carried off before his eyes, Horace was helping Gwendolyn to a seat in the other small boat, and Rosamond had gone with Mr. and Mrs. Joyce toward the larger one, to which David slowly followed them.

I feel somewhat sorry for Rosamond. After reigning pre-eminent as the belle of the county for so many years, and thinking nothing of having a dozen men ask her to go to some one social function, to be compelled at last to depend upon the chaperones must have been a Leipsic or a Waterloo to her soul. Yet it was to be expected. If she could have contented herself to rule over a kingdom of two she might have been provided with a permanent escort long ago. But, like Napoleon, she extended her conquests far and wide, and, like Napoleon, she lived to see them fall away one by one and acknowledge allegiance to other sovereigns.

Columba, of course, was pleased to have two of the three unmarried men in a little squabble for her company. But she thought it her duty to appear angry at being in a measure forcibly carried away; and, besides, she really wished to go with David, although she was extremely contemptuous that he should allow himself to be imposed on in such a fashion. What she thought he ought to have done I cannot say. She may have expected him to knock his rival

down or drag her away by main force. I have known women who had such primitive ideas, and who would apparently have been charmed for their lovers to kill each other over no worse slights than David had received.

"Dr. Houston," she began, "I do not like you to do that way. I can make up my own mind. I'm not a child."

"I know you didn't want to go with that fellow," he returned, "so I just thought I would get ahead of him. He stood there like an idiot while I was putting you into the boat."

Now this was where the doctor made his mistake, because it is a cardinal principle of the game never to speak of your rivals in uncomplimentary terms. It causes the women to defend them at once, which reacts in raising them in her esteem; and, besides, it is a decided affront to insinuate that a girl has only one desirable lover.

"You certainly have a good opinion of yourself." Columba was beginning to get angry now. "There wasn't anything else David could do when you were so very rude."

"Oh, I guess not," he replied, easily, as he picked up a paddle and commenced to propel the boat toward the upper end of the lake. "You needn't have come with me if you hadn't wanted to."

"Why, I didn't want to come with you. I wanted to go with David."

"You couldn't have wanted to go with that fellow. He sits 'round like a bump on a log and don't say anything more than a calf."

"Nobody has a chance to say anything where you are. You keep up such an everlasting flow of nonsense."

"I'm not the only one," he returned. "Your conversation is not remarkable for its intellectual brilliancy."

The doctor was beginning to get angry himself. It seems a pity that a man cannot always keep his temper when with a maiden, but nevertheless it is true that sometimes it gets away from him, even if the woman he loves is the person who excites his ill-humor. It rarely happened with Dr. Houston, and he generally received Columba's hasty speeches with remarkable equanimity. But this morning, remember that he had arisen soon after three o'clock; and, although as a physician he was accustomed to irregular hours, yet such early rising is not calculated to improve one's temper.

"Dr. Houston," she said, flushing scarlet, "take me back to the landing. I won't stay in the boat with you a minute longer. Mr. Elmore would never say anything so ungentlemanly."

"Indeed, I have no desire to stay with you, Miss Wilmot," he returned, hotly. "But I cannot leave you at the landing, because there is no one there."

"Take me to Mr. and Mrs. Joyce, then. I'll get in the boat with them."

"And David? You want to go back to that fellow, do you? I will not do anything of the kind."

"Dr. Houston, I will go."

"Well, you won't; unless you swim."

"There comes Mr. Layton and Gwendolyn. I'll scream to them."

"If you do, Miss Columba, I will never speak to you again as long as I live."

Columba was very angry. But, while she had no objection to quarreling with her lover in private, she had no intention of breaking with him irretrievably; and, in spite of her passion, she knew that Dr. Houston would keep his word if she did what she proposed.

"I have no intention of ever speaking to you again, Dr. Houston," she said. "You are no gentleman."

But all the same she did not scream.

For some minutes he paddled the boat furiously, and no word was spoken by either. Columba, who was facing the stern, saw Horace and Gwendolyn stop on the other side of the lake, where Horace began to prepare the fishing lines.

"Dr. Houston," she said, icily, "Mr. Layton and Gwendolyn have stopped over there. Please take me to them."

He turned the boat without making any reply; and, with vigorous strokes of his paddle, sent it rapidly toward the opposite shore of the narrow lake and soon approached the place where their friends were just beginning to fish.

"Hope you don't object to our company," Dr. Houston observed, when they came within easy speaking distance of the other boat.

"Why, no," Horace answered, "of course, we are glad to have you. This looks to me like a good place for fish. If you will throw your lines near that fallen tree I think you will get some bites."

"You didn't have anything that you wished to say to Gwendolyn in private, did you, Mr. Layton?" Columba inquired, after a few moments' pause. "Because, if you did, we will go away again."

"No, indeed, Miss Columba. I have lived in this great world too many years not to know better than to make love to a girl before she has had her breakfast. You know that all animals are cross before they are fed."

"Now, Mr. Layton," said Gwendolyn, smiling, "I do not think that is a bit pretty. You know I have not been cross this morning; and, besides, I do not like to be called an animal."

"You remind me very much of a dear little gazelle,"

replied Horace. "You are so gentle in your disposition. Do you know, Miss Columba, she even objected to my putting a minnow on her hook, until I explained to her that it didn't hurt them at all, and that they would be more than proud to serve such a celebrated person."

"Here is your line, Miss Columba," said Dr. Houston.

"I do not care to fish, Dr. Houston," she replied.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Horace. "What are we are going to do for breakfast, if you don't help us out?"

"I do not care to fish, Mr. Layton. I never do."

"But don't you know that the fish will never bite at a man's hook when such charming girls are around? And if they see you sitting here without trying to attract them they may get mad and not come to breakfast with us."

Columba made no reply, and for some minutes the party gave themselves up to watching the placidly floating corks in silence. Through the clefts in the trees the gorgeous tints of the morning could be seen in the eastern sky, and the sun's first rays had just begun to touch the top of the grove on the opposite shore. A lone dragonfly, emulating the famous early bird, bobbed here and there over the face of the water in search of prey, with occasional pauses for rest on one and another of the corks, a sure sign of luck to the fisherman. The steep banks shielded the lake from the gentle morning breeze, and its surface was as smooth and unwrinkled as the cheeks of a maiden just blushing into womanhood.

It was Horace who disturbed the silence by a whisper.

"You have a bite, Lady Gwendolyn," he said.

To tell you the truth, Gwendolyn's thoughts were not directed toward her cork. She was just arranging a little scene in her mind for the next novel, where one of the villains should push the hero, who was clad in complete

armor, into the castle moat, and then try to keep him under water with a spear. But, of course, it was an easy matter for the hero to pull the villain in by his own spear, cut off his head while swimming with one hand, climb the side of the moat by aid of the spear, and continue his conquering journey. The fact that a knight would be unable to swim when armed *cap-a-pie* did not bother our authoress a particle. I do not believe that she even thought of the difficulty, for she was too great a genius ever to trouble herself about such puny forces as the attraction of gravitation. But if she had thought about it the combat would not have been changed, for she never objected to her characters performing impossibilities. Such feats only demonstrated the superiority of her heroes to ordinary mortals. And, judging from the sales of her books, her readers also highly approved of them and continually called for more.

"What did you say, Mr. Layton?" she asked, when Horace interrupted her meditations.

"You've got a bite."

"A bite?"

"Yes, look at your cork."

"Why, it's gone. Where is my cork?"

"Pull in your line. You've caught a fish."

But as Gwendolyn was obviously undecided as to the proper method of performing this feat, Horace arose carefully, and, taking the pole from her hands, he pulled a large sun perch out of the water.

"You have a fine one," Dr. Houston remarked, as Horace caught it in his hand.

"But, Mr. Layton," Gwendolyn exclaimed, in a grieved tone of voice, "the hook is right through its mouth."

"Why, certainly," he returned. "Where did you expect the hook to be?"

"But it must hurt it awfully. And it is such a pretty thing."

"Well, I suppose it does hurt it somewhat," Horace said, as he detached the hook after some trouble and placed the fish in the live box. "But you cannot expect to catch fish without hurting them."

"Well, then, I won't fish any more. I am not going to hurt the poor little things that way. I don't think it's right. E-e-e," she went on, covering her face with her hands. "Don't do that, Mr. Layton."

This concluding remark was made when Horace was placing a fresh minnow on her hook.

Dr. Houston was inclined to laugh, as his course in the medical school had made him extremely callous to the infliction of pain on other creatures. He wondered how Gwendolyn would have enjoyed certain vivisecting operations, in which he had taken part with much pleasure. But he never forgot his business, and Gwendolyn paid twenty-five dollars a visit, and so he said, gravely:

"Your humanity does you a great deal of credit, Lady Gwendolyn. But I think that you need not trouble yourself in this case. You see, the mouth of a fish is composed entirely of cartilage and carries no nerve fiber at all. A fish has no more feeling in its mouth than you have in your hair or your nails."

"But it would hurt me awfully to be lifted up by my hair."

"That is because your hair is attached to the epidermis of your head, which bears nerve fiber. There is no sensation in the hair itself. Now, the cartilage of a fish's mouth is attached to the bone, which carries no nerves."

"Are you certain it didn't hurt him, Dr. Houston?"

"Yes, I am absolutely sure of it. There can be no pain without nerves."

"And look how happy he is now," Horace added, pointing to the live box. "He looks as if he was extremely proud of being caught by such a celebrated hand."

"Hush," said Dr. Houston, in a whisper. "I've got a bite, myself."

The great authoress of romance, having her fears relieved in regard to the humanity of her present occupation, the party continued to fish with indifferent success until the sound of the breakfast-horn from the cottage drew all hands to the center of attraction.

Gwendolyn's man cook had come out in the wagon with the provisions, and when our friends gathered at the landing they found a large table-cloth spread on a smooth piece of ground, on which great platters of fish were reinforced by fresh rolls and steaming-hot coffee.

It will at once be evident to the astute reader that the cook had had an interview with the fisherman in charge of the lake on a day before the picnic. Because the reader knows without doubt the first principle, that if you go on a fish-fry and wish to have a fish-fry, you must be sure to arrange for the fish to fry before you go to the fish-fry.

But no matter who caught the fish, they pleased our hungry friends exceedingly and disappeared with a wonderful celerity, as if they had again dived beneath the surface of their own cherished lake. You may be certain that Lady Gwendolyn's sympathy for the poor little creatures had also vanished when they lay before her, brown and hot, with a knife and fork at hand.

After resting awhile when breakfast was finished, Dr. Houston assisted Rosamond into his boat and drove it rapidly down the lake. Horace would gladly have allowed David to take Columba out in the other *tete-a-tete* boat, but that young woman stuck closely to Mrs. Joyce, and insisted on going in the boat with the chaperones. After

quarreling with one of her lovers because he made fun of the other, she was now inclined to fall out with the other for no reason in the world except that she had had a fuss on his account.

Young girls are certainly unaccountable creatures, and if you attempt to woo one of them, when by chance you have excited some interest in her breast, you may daily expect insult and contumely. Indeed, as I have remarked before, unless you have an inordinate opinion of your own merits, your chance of success will be slight. But as most men possess this quality, I presume that few matches are entirely prevented by a maiden's vagaries, and it is only the unusual man like David who is in danger of losing the woman who loves him.

However, Columba did not succeed in picking a quarrel with David on this occasion, because he was so much chagrined by his failure of the morning that he devoted himself to the married lady, and left her to Mr. Joyce's care for assistance in her fishing operations.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### MRS. MEDLOCK'S DILEMMA.

JOHN COBBS' injuries were somewhat more serious than the doctor had at first supposed, and it was several days before he was permitted to return to his store. He passed the time of his enforced idleness on a lounge in Mrs. Wilmot's sitting-room, and he was as cross as a bear with a sore head.

I do not wish the reader to suppose that I am intimately acquainted with any bears with sore heads, or indeed with any bears at all. I generally avoid such characters if I can. But there is a prevailing impression that a person in a bad humor is either as cross as a bear or as cross as two sticks; and, as I think that bruin with a sore head would be much more disagreeable to have in the family than a couple of strips of wood at right angles to each other, I use the former expression.

Mrs. Medlock had kindly constituted herself chief nurse and spent the greater portion of her time in waiting on the invalid and in trying to amuse him. Her success in this latter endeavor was very doubtful, but she was a good-natured lady and she did not mind her patient's sulkiness.

Mamye Clay came every evening after the store was closed to render an account of the business. She rather dreaded these interviews, because her employer found so

much fault, and generally expressed the opinion that the store was horribly mismanaged, and that he was being ruined with great rapidity, and would soon have to apply for a situation in the poorhouse.

On the fourth evening after the accident, however, she found him in a much better humor. Dr. Houston had just left, after having announced that his patient was well enough to go to his store in a carriage the next day, and when Mrs. Medlock came in from paying a call, she found John and Mamye chatting together very amicably.

"I say, Mrs. Medlock," John said, as soon as that lady appeared, "what's the matter with the Doc? I only asked him how he and little C'lumby was getting on at the house-party, and he got on his ear right off. Said he didn't know nothing about Miss Wilmot, and what's more, he didn't care. I said I thought they was rattling sweet when I left, and I'll be—no, I mean he got up and slammed the door behind him without saying nothing more."

Mrs. Medlock was in her element in the twinkling of a star, because if there was one thing which she did enjoy more than anything else in the world it was somebody's love affair.

"I heard all about it just now," she returned, briskly. "Mrs. Douglass was just telling me, and she got it from good authority. In fact, I think she said Susie Raymond told her. Anyway, he had a big quarrel with Columba out at Gwendolyn's fish-fry. He told her he was tired of her way of playing fast and loose, and that he was bound to have a positive answer right off. And she tried to put him off again, but he wouldn't stand it, and so she let him know that she was engaged to David Elmore, and that they were going to be married this fall. Mrs. Douglass said the doctor was awfully cut up about it, and he just

left her in a boat in the middle of the lake and walked eight miles to Castle Montmorency to get his buggy, to come home."

"But Dave is in love with Rosy Lattimer," Mamye objected, as soon as Mrs. Medlock paused to take breath.

"Columba made him do that. You see, she didn't want anybody to know she was going to be married, and she hasn't let him come here for nearly two months, and she's been carrying on with Dr. Houston all this time. But it's all out now, because Columba told all about it at the breakfast-table, and asked Gwendolyn and Rosamond to be bridesmaids."

"If I had a sweetheart," said Mamye Clay, somewhat sadly, "I'd want to see him oftener than once in two months."

"Can't see why you ain't got none," John interposed, grinning. "You're a medium good-looking girl, and you sho do try hard."

"It's because Mamye is too particular," Mrs. Medlock began, when Mamye interrupted her.

"You needn't talk, Mr. Cobbs," she said, pertly. "I ain't heard that you are engaged to Gwendolyn, if you did go to the house-party."

"It's only because I fell down those—stairs," John returned, scowling. "I'd had her before now if I hadn't."

"Columba's a peculiar girl," said Mrs. Medlock. John had displayed so much bad temper in regard to his accident that she was anxious to change the subject. "I remember once when I was a girl that I was engaged to four men at the same time, and I had an awful time keeping them straight. Two of them lived out of town, so they were not so much trouble, as a general thing; and I made it a condition that none of them should ever come to see me without first asking permission, and, of course, I only

wore the ring of the man I expected to see. But I got into an awful scrape about it one evening. I had an engagement to go calling with an outside man, and I was sitting there playing the piano waiting for him, with four big diamonds on my finger, when the bell rang and I turned 'round as the parlor door opened, and there stood one of the men I was engaged to. The man I was going out with couldn't come, and sent him to tell me. Well, I whipped my left hand under my dress as quick as I could, but he wanted to know what was the matter, and—and—Oh, well, you know how men do. He would have found out all about it because, of course, he was stronger than I, but the bell rang again and he had to stop. And in came the other town man. He wanted to borrow a book, and when he found the other man he just sat down and stayed. Of course, they hated each other worse than poison, although each one thought he had the best of it, and they just sat and glared at each other. And the funny part of it was that pretty soon one of the out-of-town men came. He had telegraphed, but I didn't get the message till the next day. And there I was with those rings on my hand under a fold of my dress, and I couldn't even get up to shake hands with them. Oh, it was awful, awful."

"But how did you finally get rid of them, Mrs. Medlock?" asked Mamye, much interested.

"Why, about ten o'clock my father came in and stopped at the parlor door to see who was there, and, of course, the men all got up to speak to him, and when they did I jerked the rings off and dropped them in the piano. The top was raised, you know. They made an awful noise when they fell, and the men looked mighty funny. Each one thought I was trying to hide his ring from the others, and they all got mad, and I had no end of trouble smooth-

ing it over. But it wasn't near as bad as it would have been if they had seen all those rings."

"Was Mr. Medlock one of the men?" Mamye asked.

"No, that was a long time before I met Mr. Medlock. I never had any idea of marrying a preacher then."

"You must have had an awful lot of fun when you were a girl, Mrs. Medlock," said Mamye.

"Well, it was a good deal of fun, Mamye, but it was a whole lot of trouble, and I had to tell so many stories. One afternoon I was going driving with one of the nicest of the men, and we sat down in the parlor for a little while, because—because— Oh, well, you know driving is so public. And we had just promised to tell each other everything and never to have any secrets, when the postman came; and, like an idiot, the maid brought me a letter from another man right there in the parlor. And what could I do? I couldn't show it to him, and it evidently wasn't a business letter, so I couldn't say it was from a dressmaker, and so I just told him it was from my brother and laid it on the mantel-piece. But he knew my brother's handwriting; and, besides, he saw the postmark, and brothers don't write you sixteen pages, anyhow; and, although he was perfectly polite and did not question my word for a minute, yet he stopped coming to my house and I had to break off the engagement. And he was the nicest man of them all, and rich, too; and if it had not been for that idiotic maid I might have married him."

"But you got married, anyhow," Mamye suggested.

"Oh, yes, I married Mr. Medlock. But that was years afterwards. And I really liked that man, too. And he never would come back. He must have found out something besides the letter."

"Why didn't you marry him right off if you wanted to and kick the other fellows?" John asked.

"Why, looking back on the whole affair, Mr. Cobbs, I really don't know. He was a nice man and dreadfully in love with me, and I liked him, too; but I know now that I treated him shamefully. I suppose I thought that he loved me so much that I could do as I pleased, but I think now that he was entirely right in giving me up. He never married; he's an old bachelor right now in the town I came from, and I married Mr. Medlock after about five years. But he never would come back."

"That fellow was a fool," said John. "I'd have made you marry me if I had wanted to."

"Well, let's see you make Gwendolyn marry you now," said Mamye.

"I bet you ten dollars that I marry the lady before Christmas, if I can ever get my foot well."

"Oh, you'll be all right in a week or two," Mrs. Medlock remarked, encouragingly, "and all ready to ask Gwendolyn to go to the Fair with you."

"They tell me they're going to have a big ball in the firemen's hall during Fair week," Mamye said, with much enthusiasm.

"Don't you think you'd better write a note and ask Gwendolyn to go with you right away, Mr. Cobbs?" said Mrs. Medlock. "When I was a girl I used to make engagements months in advance."

"But I ain't got no invite to the party," John objected.

"Oh, it'll be given by the young men," Mamye explained, "and of course they'll want all they can get. You only have to pay your share of the expenses."

"That'll be all hunkey, then. I ain't done no dancing in a long time, but I reckon I'll get on all right."

"Why, of course you will," Mrs. Medlock rejoined. "I don't believe anybody could forget how to dance after they

had once learned how. I only wish I could go," she continued, somewhat sadly. "That is one thing about being a preacher's wife that I have never gotten reconciled to. Of course, I wouldn't expect to dance much, but I would like to go and look on, anyhow. I don't see any harm in dancing, but I suppose I ought not to say so as long as the church says it's wrong."

"It's a mighty lot of fun, Mrs. Medlock," said John. "But I reckon that's why they don't want you to do it, ain't it? I don't take no stock in churches. They're always trying to keep a fellow from having any fun."

Mrs. Medlock's face showed that she thoroughly agreed with John in this opinion. But her official position as preacher's wife, of course, compelled her to say a few words in defense of the organization from which her husband drew his support. This she did in a half-hearted fashion, as if she hardly believed what she said, after which Mamye Clay took up the thread of the conversation.

"They say the Fair this year is going to be perfectly splendid," she said. "They are going to have a balloon ascension, and a bull fight, and horse races, and a whole lot of other things."

"They struck me for fifty plunks last week," John observed, with a frown. "I ought to get some fun for my money; I won't get nothing else."

"You are going to have an exhibit out there, I suppose," said Mrs. Medlock, "and put Mamye in charge of it. All the prominent merchants are going to."

"Oh, I reckon so," he returned, sulkily. "If I can ever get my foot well. You going, Miss Mamye?" he continued, as she arose to take her leave. "Well, I'll be down in the morning, and kind of straighten things up; you see, if I don't. You be on time, understand?"

## CHAPTER XX.

### LOVE'S CONDUCT.

WHEN a man loves a woman his first impulse is to tell her about it. And then, when a sense of his utter unworthiness overwhelms him and he realizes her infinite superiority, the idea that such a divine being could ever consent to marry him seems so thoroughly absurd that his second thought is to keep his trouble to himself and tell her nothing.

Now, course, the first impulse is the strongest. If it were not so, there would be few marriages for love in this world. But when the truth does come out, the struggle between these conflicting emotions in the soul of the man produces a stammering avowal, which is as far from the fluent love-making of the characters in novels written by authors of Gwendolyn's school as the sky is from the earth.

Please understand me, gentle reader. The love of which I speak is the pure, refined metal, from which all the dross of self has been eliminated, and it is a much rarer commodity in this world than you have probably been taught to believe.

When a man in a fit of jealous rage takes the life of a woman who has refused him and then his own, his act is caused by a passion which the unthinking world calls love, but which bears the same resemblance to romantic love as

an Ethiopian does to a Caucasian. If he really loved the woman he would grieve because she preferred another to himself; but he would thoroughly acquiesce in her decision, and the idea of depriving her of life could never by any possibility enter his head.

I have known men who really believed they were in love; so much so indeed that they almost proclaimed it from the housetops. If the women exchanged ten words with other men they were quivering with anger immediately, and they expected and required the maidens they were said to love to walk in paths which they chose for them, under the high penalty of their displeasure. But if the woman did some little thing to wound the egoism of one of these men, *presto,* his so-called love was gone, and in all probability he would be in love with another girl in the same fashion in a few short months.

Under the influence of a passion of this kind a man might die for a woman, but assuredly he would not be willing to live for her. For, in spite of the very highest authority to the contrary, I believe that a man may have a greater love than that which is expressed by a willingness to lay down his life for his friend.

The fact is, that a readiness to die for a cause or a person is not at all an uncommon trait in human nature. Do not the firemen in our large cities risk their lives daily for money? When the hour demands the sacrifice of the life of a pilot or an engineer of a great steamer for the saving of those committed to his charge, you will find it rare that such a sacrifice is refused. It is really unusual for a person to be in extreme need and no one ready to place life in hazard to assist him.

More than this: In time of war are participants in forlorn hopes lacking? Will not a man go into the dominion of death, where the chances of survival are scarcely

one in a million, urged on by a fantastic sentiment termed honor, which, as Falstaff said, is the property of him "who died o' Wednesday." *"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."* This is a sublime sentiment and greatly to be praised. But when the war is waged, not for the preservation of one's own fatherland, but for the robbery of the home of another people, are there not always men as willing to die for an ignoble object as there are for a noble one?

Many animals even, whom we have termed lower than ourselves, are ready at all times to face death for the preservation of their offspring or their mates.

No, I do not think that to lay down a life is the greatest evidence of love that a man can display. But if you find one who, during a long life, will bear the odium of a false accusation, the scorn and contumely of the world, and even the contempt of one whom he loves, in order that he may shield such a one from calamity, and all this without possible hope of advantage to himself; if you can find such a one, I say, you have discovered the sublimest height to which the love of earth can attain. As I said before, it is a rare commodity.

I am somewhat wandering from my subject, because, although I know that David Elmore was really in love with Columba Wilmot, yet as there was no occasion for his suffering any shame to protect her, I cannot say positively that he was capable of it, although I believe that he was.

But this is an extremely commonplace story which concerns itself only with ordinary mortals, whose actions seldom depart from the beaten track as far as the width of a No. 2 shoe. I suppose I ought to except from this candid statement the celebrated novelist, and most assuredly would if I had any idea that these pages would ever meet her eyes. But she very seldom reads any books except her

own; and as I am given to understand by publishers' advertisements that great geniuses are as plentiful as cats on a backyard fence, I will allow her to remain among the ordinary mortals.

Three weeks had passed since the conversation recorded in the preceding chapter and the evening before the great county fair had arrived.

During these weeks David had been trying to fill the vacancy which Dr. Houston's absence had left at Mrs. Wilmot's residence; but it must be confessed that his success was not very noticeable. He forced himself to leave his pride and his diffidence in his bandbox, and he went to call at Columba's home almost every evening.

The statement that David called on Columba so frequently by no means includes the information that he saw her, for that young woman had developed a most unaccountable series of headaches, which he was informed that she was suffering from as soon as he arrived. Occasionally, coming in without being expected, he found her sitting on the front gallery with some of the boarders, and he passed most enjoyable (?) evenings listening to Mrs. Medlock's reminiscences. Of course, he asked Columba many times to call or drive with him, but she invariably declined on the plea of another engagement. He knew these excuses to be entirely untrue, and it took all his resolution to ask her again after such point-blank refusals; but he had thoroughly made up his mind that he would insist on having his fate decided and the agony of suspense which he endured ended.

David could realize with his brain that from a business point of view he was a better match than Dr. Houston; and as the doctor had given Columba up, as people said, forever, he was not without some hope of success. If he could have read her face occasionally when she thought he was

not looking, he would have found much more reason for encouragement. The ability to discern the signs of love, however, only comes after long experience in this world, and Columba was poor David's first.

But, although nothing comes to him who waits, an opportunity can generally be obtained by the man who goes after it, and David proved to be no exception to the rule.

About half-past eight o'clock on Sunday evening, making his usual pilgrimage to the shrine of his lady-love, he found Columba alone on the front gallery. There was a song service that evening at the Methodist Church, and the entire household had gone, except herself and her invalid father, who was asleep in a back room upstairs. It is remarkable how much more religious we become when we live in the family with a preacher.

Wonderful to relate, Columba was very lively that evening. She spoke of the Fair which was to open the next day with much enthusiasm. In fact, she carried the greater part of the weight of the conversation, because David was so full of the avowal which he came to make that there was no room in his soul for any other idea.

Theoretically, he desired to lead up to the topic gradually, and he had many times arranged in this thoughts graceful methods of asking his sweetheart to become his wife. But, somehow, when the moment arrived to put his theories into practice, none of them seemed to be adequate.

He several times tried to turn the conversation into the paths of sentiment, but she frustrated his feeble attempts in the easiest possible manner, and continued to discuss the Fair and the ball, and anything else in the world which was the most remote from the matter which filled all his being.

In the meantime David knew that time was flying, and

that the return of the church-goers would soon end his chances for that night. He was absolutely determined to have it over with then and there; and yet I know that if some random caller had arrived and broken up the conversation he would have been greatly relieved.

The clock struck the half hour, which informed him that the song service had already lasted much longer than usual, and that the family might be expected at any minute.

He set his teeth in desperation.

"Miss Columba," he stammered, interrupting one of her most lively sentences, "I—I—came here—to tell you—I—I love you."

For several minutes nothing was said on either side, and when Columba at last broke the silence, her voice sounded strange and wild.

"Mr. Elmore," she said, "I—I don't believe it. You—you don't. I don't— You can't."

He gathered some courage from her evident embarrassment.

"But I do, I do. I love you better than my life."

"But I don't care— I am not going to— I won't——"

And starting suddenly to her feet, she ran into the house and disappeared from view up the front stairs.

Poor David! Poor David!

An older man, who had gathered some experience in woman's ways, and who was possessed with the firm conviction that any woman upon whom he bestowed his lordly preference would be not only willing, but anxious; such a man would have been charmed by similar conduct on the part of the favored girl, and would have asked her again as soon as possible. Dr. Houston asked Columba to marry him almost every time he saw her, and she always laughed at him, unless she happened to be in a bad humor, when she abused him.

But David went home feeling that the universe had exploded, and that the stars were rattling down upon his devoted head. He would gladly have abandoned his life then and there, simply because there was for him no earthly reason why he should live any longer. How could he tell, poor boy, that Columba cried herself to sleep that night? He had as little hope of winning her hand as he had of gaining Orion for his possession.

He made no attempt to sleep, himself, but sat and watched the moon sink slowly to the west, and years afterwards, as it seemed to him, he saw the rosy dawn flushing the eastern sky and the sun rise upon a world, where he felt that for him the sun of life could never shine again.

Poor David! Poor David!

## CHAPTER XXI.

### "BUT NOT FOR LOVE."

THE business houses of Judithland had almost all agreed to close at twelve o'clock on the opening day of the Fair, in order to give their employes an opportunity to visit this great amusement bazaar. As Colonel Elmore was the president of the Fair Association, he had announced that the bank would be closed all day on Monday, and David had promised his father to sell tickets at the grounds during the forenoon.

He felt that it was almost impossible for him to carry out this engagement, but his sensitive nature prompted him to hide his anguish in his own bosom, and therefore he made his toilet and appeared at the breakfast-table at the usual hour. After eating scarcely anything, but drinking several cups of strong coffee, he obtained his father's horse and buggy from the stable and drove rapidly to the Fair Grounds, taking a boy with him to bring the conveyance back for the use of other members of his family, who were to come out later.

It was a beautiful day, and the cool, clear weather which had succeeded the rain of the previous week promised a successful Fair, so far as the elements could contribute to make it so. Although cool weather was not exactly adapted to advance the condition of the cotton crop, on which the prosperity of the South principally depends, yet

it was extremely grateful and invigorating to man and beast after the long, hot summer.

The Fair Grounds were located about half a mile from the outskirts of Judithland, where a bubbling spring afforded an ample supply of pure water for the use of the race horses and the stock exhibits.

Surrounding the grounds and stretching away into the distance as far as one could see were cotton fields, interspersed here and there with patches of corn. On the latter the withered stalks stood mournfully; for, having performed their mission in this world and transmitted their excellence to their posterity, there remained nothing more for them but to die and be forgotten.

The cotton plants, however, still displayed a vigorous life. The foliage was slightly wilted by the cool morning air, but the pink and yellow blossoms and the still forming squares promised an abundant top crop, if the sun was propitious and furnished the heat necessary for its perfection.

Lower down on the plant the opening bolls displayed their snowy whiteness like tips of foam upon a dark green sea, and they seemed to cry aloud for the hand of the picker. But unfortunately it was Monday, besides being chilly, and it is a general characteristic of the thriftlessness of country negroes that, after working for a year to produce a crop, in harvest time they still insist upon having three days' rest out of seven, and they ride joyously off to town or sit idly by and watch the fleecy locks of cotton hanging from the bolls, when a heavy rain may destroy half the fruit of their labor for twelve months.

David passed many exhibits on their way to the Fair.

Here was a wagon-load of fancy poultry, each pair in its coop; and the roosters' challenge to combat was flung from cage to cage as if they were delighted to show that an

unfavorable environment had no effect upon their belligerent propensities.

Now he overtook a drove of prize-winning polled Angus, more like elephants than cattle, waddling along at a slow pace, as a due precaution against dissipating any valuable fat by exercise.

The swine exhibit was hauled with much grunting and squealing from its younger members. The older hogs, however, were so oppressed with lardaceous tissue that squealing was for them entirely too much exertion, and they only expressed their disapprobation at some unusual jolt on the road by mild grunts.

A half-grown colt gazed at the world from the top of a crate, perched high on other goods in an express wagon. He had a quizzical expression upon his countenance, as if he considered it a good joke that those funny men should move him so slowly in such an undignified fashion along a road which his own active legs were not only willing, but anxious to cover in one-third of the time.

The four-legged man tramped sullenly along in company with the human Fly, and with his two extra legs done up in brown paper on his shoulder. The Fly was now walking disconsolately on the ground, head up instead of down, and suffering from the unallayed demands of a healthy appetite, for their previous stand had been a bad one, and breakfast that morning had been lacking.

An Arab girl from "The Streets of Cairo" had struck up an acquaintance with the proprietor of the flying horses and was now riding gracefully on top of a wagon-load of wooden steeds, bandying jokes with her fellows as she passed, in full rich tones which sounded remarkably Irish.

On reaching the Fair grounds, David busied himself in arranging the box office and assorting his change, so as to be ready for business. After this was accomplished he

found the time hang heavily upon his hands, for the people of Judithland generally only came out in the afternoon, and the few customers that he had were countrymen with their wives and children, who had come in to make a day of it.

If David had been completely employed all the forenoon his trouble might have been somewhat alleviated, because constant work is the best remedy for heart disease of his kind. His idle morning, however, allowed his somber thoughts to have full scope, and the exhaustion due to his sleepless night added to the blackness of his meditations.

He felt the utter futility of attempting to exist without Columba, and he brooded over the idea that there was no possible reason why he should continue to live on the earth any longer. Perhaps she might shed a tear over his grave and be sorry for a little while, and he found some consolation in the thought.

Although self-destruction seemed to be his only remaining recourse, yet it is one thing to decide that you ought to kill yourself and quite a different matter to carry it out in practice; and so, when two o'clock slowly came and David turned over the ticket office to his successor, his meditations stopped with the theory, which he had no intention of executing.

But when he had finished the transfer of his tickets and money, and looked again from the window of the office, he saw the woman he loved, who had left him, as it seemed, a thousand years before, looking remarkably fresh and beautiful, in a buggy with Dr. Houston, just pausing in front of the carriage gate to the Fair. Neither looked at David, although both were conscious of his presence; and, as the doctor was already provided with tickets, they soon disappeared inside the inclosure.

Now this was too much.

It was bad enough to give up all hope of obtaining Columba, but to see her bestow herself upon another man was more than sufficient to cause David's cup of misery to overflow all around. Besides, when every nerve in his body was shrieking with anguish, it seemed so utterly heartless that she could be able to be lively and gay, and he rushed frantically from the ticket office with the single desire of finding a means of ending his own life.

When we are young and experience such troubles for the first time, they appear like giant forms in our path, and there seems to remain no possible escape for us in this world. When we are old, although our misfortunes are still hard to bear, yet we can look back on many similar waters of bitterness from which we drank, and of which we have almost forgotten the taste; and we are sure that we can live down the present infliction in the same way.

David would not go towards the grand stand, because he knew that Columba was there; and he made his way for no particular reason towards the center of the racetrack, where the hot-air balloon was being inflated for the much-advertised ascension. And that old Serpent, who is always lying in wait for the time when a temptation will have its surest effect, met him there in the guise of Jacobs, who had been employed to take charge of the amusements during the Fair.

Jacobs was a stranger in Judithland; but, Colonel Elmore being president of the Fair Association, David had become quite well acquainted with him in the two or three weeks just passed.

"We're in the devil of a fix, Mr. Elmore," Jacobs said. "That scoundrel Timothy, who makes the balloon ascensions, has gone and got drunk. I've offered twenty dol-

lars to any of the other men to go, but they're all afraid. The ascension was the strong card for to-day, and people will be devilish mad if it's left out."

While Jacobs was speaking, David was rapidly thinking. Why should he not make the ascension himself? Somewhat the same feeling which prompted him to climb the pear tree when a little boy now came over him. He would show Columba what a brave man she had lost; and if he happened to fall off, which he expected, he would be relieved from the agony of existence in the most expeditious manner, and would be remembered as a hero and not as a suicide. To be sure he would have preferred that she should understand that he killed himself on her account. But, after all, she would know that her conduct had driven him to do a deed of desperate courage, and perhaps it would be better so.

"I will make the ascension myself, Mr. Jacobs," he said, quietly, but with his heart somewhere in his throat. Although he was thoroughly resolved, he could not help the feeling, and his voice sounded strange and distant in his own ears.

"What, you, Mr. Elmore!" Jacobs exclaimed. "The devil you say. You can't do it, can you?"

"Oh, yes, I can," replied David, gathering more courage as he spoke. "I am considerable of an athlete, and I have always wanted to go up in a balloon."

"But you'd get dizzy and break your neck."

"No, I won't. I can hold on to anything that anybody else can."

"But your father would jump on me with both feet. I'd hate like the devil to make him mad."

"You need not tell him that you knew anything about it. You can be busy somewhere else on the grounds, and

I will tell him that I found the man drunk and took his place."

"Well, Mr. Elmore, it's your Fair and not mine. I'd devilish hate for the people to miss the ascension on the first day, and if you want to take the chances you can, I reckon. But don't forget that it ain't my fault if anything happens."

Columba had been quiet and amiable all that morning; and when Dr. Houston had asked her over the telephone to go out to the Fair with him, she had consented willingly, and with a slight caressing tone in her voice. When a woman loves and knows that she is beloved, she is apt to shed the love-light upon the bystanders, even when hiding it from the object of her affection.

Indeed, she listened to the doctor so sweetly, although she said little herself, that he considered his prospects much better than ever before; and he resolved to ask her again as they drove home together. Neither mentioned the quarrel which they had had when they last parted. Such unpleasant matters are best left behind in the silence of space, as the earth pursues its swift revolving course around its controlling star.

The grand stand was comfortably filled that Monday afternoon, and the people were getting impatient. The balloon ascension had been advertised for half-past two o'clock, to be followed by horse races; and it was now after three, and, although the balloon was inflated and waiting, the aeronaut had not yet made his appearance. The pleasure-seekers were beginning to feel that they were being defrauded of a large part of their fun.

About half-past three, however, the balloonist came out of one of the tents attired in the conventional tights. He took his place slowly upon the trapeze of his airship, and,

giving the signal to cast off, he rose with rapidity toward the clouds. Many people remarked that, unlike most of his kind, he ascended with his back towards the spectators.

A light breeze carried the balloon in a northerly direction, so that it continued in plain sight of all the company in the grand stand.

"Don't you hate to see a man do anything like that?" said Columba. "Don't you think he must be awfully afraid?"

"Oh, I reckon not, Miss Columba," Dr. Houston returned, laughing. "That fellow goes up hundreds of times every year. He is just as much at home on that trapeze up in the air as you are in your own parlor."

"But don't they ever get killed? I should think they would get dizzy and fall off."

"They get killed once in a while, when the parachute happens to come down on a tree or a house. But, of course, a man has to take some chances to make a living. I don't suppose their mortality is very much higher than that of railroad engineers."

"Oh, he's hanging by his legs, Dr. Houston," she cried, excitedly. "Lend me your glasses, please. I want to look at him."

A moment later she fell senseless at his feet.

David seated himself upon the wooden bar which was to carry him to eternity, and after a brief pause ordered the attendants by a wave of his hand to unloose the ropes which held the balloon. As they were stablemen, arrived in Judithland only that morning, they did not know that he was an amateur.

He would have given worlds for a last look at Columba, but, knowing that she was with his rival, he turned his back towards her.

He saw the men untie the knots which bound him to life with a strange feeling, in which two opposing impulses struggled for mastery.

His soul insisted that it could not and would not continue to exist to see its loved one bestow herself upon another man.

His body cried out to him that life was good, and begged and pleaded with him not to destroy it in the strength of its youth.

And he himself, holding the balance between the two, gave the signal to cast off.

A sudden jerk, and the earth fell away from him. It seemed to have lost its support in space, and to be rapidly falling to destruction. The men who left him grew smaller and smaller. He heard a faint sound of applause, which quickly died away. Now the racetrack appeared like a boy's marble ring, on which toy horses were exercising themselves. And the circle of his horizon grew larger.

He became filled with a weird sense of exultation. What a brave man he was! Weak from his boyhood, and lacking opportunity for displaying his courage, he had at times feared that he was a coward. But now he knew better, and the world would know it also. And he hung by his legs in sheer bravado.

And Columba! How sorry she would be that she had cast off such a hero. How she would weep when they brought his mangled body to her. But he would not be there to see. His crushed corpse would be there, but where would he be? He could not tell. He grew dizzy as he glanced down from his appalling height, and he shut his eyes to keep out the sight.

Where would he be? Where was the suicide's place? In hell through all eternity? He had heard little of hell from the pulpit in late years, but the recollection of his

"But Not for Love"

childhood's teaching came over him. Could he bear to go there? Yet it could not be worse than life without his love, and there might be no such place. No, decidedly, he would chance it.

Opening his eyes before taking the fatal plunge, he saw the town of Judithland spread out before him like a map.

He saw his home, where he had passed so many happy days. Was he never to see it again? He saw them carry home a disfigured mass which had been himself, and he saw his mother in tears, and oh, such tears, such an agony of tears. Could he treat his mother so? How many nights she had nursed him during sickness; carefully, kindly, patiently. And he was about to repay her love by sending her a suicide's remains.

Could he treat his mother so? Never! Better a thousand years of torture than to cause her to shed such tears. He clutched frantically at a rope which hung near him.

It was well for David that, feeling the rope give in his hands, he abandoned it and grasped the bar of the trapeze. He had hardly done so when a rushing wind filled his ears, followed by a loud clap as the parachute expanded and a sudden jerk, which nearly wrenched him from his hold. He could never tell how he came to the ground. An indistinct impression that he had been struck by lightning during a violent windstorm was all that his memory retained. But when men from the Fair reached the spot where the parachute landed they found David feebly attempting to disencumber himself from its folds, much shaken in spirit, but sound in body and limb.

Are you not disgusted, fair reader? Mentally fed, as you have been in your fiction, upon the sweets of blood and carnage, you must think it simply outrageous that the only opportunity thus far in the story for a tragedy should end in such an anti-climax as that.

Would you have thought more of David, however, if he had carried out his purpose? It is, of course, generally considered to be the hero's business to kill somebody. And as this is absolutely necessary, it is much more altruistic for him to slay himself than to go off and murder some one else, who possibly might not care to be killed at all.

But who said David was a hero, anyhow? I am sure I did not. He may have thought so himself for a few minutes, but he speedily found out his mistake.

And, after all, do you know any heroes, outside of books, I mean? You are doubtless sure, male reader, that you have latent heroic qualities yourself; but, unfortunately, the surroundings of a dry goods store have only allowed their development heretofore in theory. But what do you think of the clerk at the next counter? What! you say. That little, red-headed, freckle-faced, bow-legged Dutchman! He's no hero! Exactly so. That is the point I wish to make. Now what do you suppose he thinks of you?

Please excuse me, gentle maiden. I am sure that it is useless to tell you that Edgar is not a hero, because you know better. But you just wait until you have been married to Edgar for about five years, and if you still think that he is a hero, I will apologize, in writing if you wish, and think better of the permanence of romantic love forever after.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### JOHN COBBS TO THE RESCUE.

JUDITH COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION.

GRAND BULL FIGHT!

Tuesday, September 15.

REAL BULLS!

IMPORTED SPANISH TOREADORS!!

The managers of the Fair take pleasure in announcing that they have secured at great expense for one day only the services of a celebrated company of bull fighters recently arrived from Spain, who will give a realistic exhibition of the bull ring exactly as conducted in Madrid. Nothing in the performance can offend the most refined or cultivated taste.

Performance commences promptly at 3 p. m.

COME ONE! COME ALL!

Tuesday, September 15.

*Muerte a los Toros.*

The progress which our friend John Cobbs had made in winning the affections of the great authoress during the three weeks which had passed since the house-party did not appear noticeable. He had been handicapped, it is

true, by the fact that the early closing agreement of the stores of Judithland had terminated August 31, which compelled him to do all his courting on Sundays. To be sure, Gwendolyn had given him a standing invitation to spend the Sabbath at her home whenever he chose, and as soon as his ankle became sufficiently well, he had availed himself of this permission and had passed two Sundays in her company.

The authoress speedily decided that she would give her suitor a name more in keeping with his position as an aspirant for the hand of Lady Gwendolyn Rowena Montmorency. As this was an important matter, however, she wished to take sufficient time to consider it properly, and until his new title was in readiness she addressed him by the name which was painted on the sign over his store. This greatly wounded her artistic sensibilities, but for the present she felt that she must endure it.

At the time of the present chapter her search for a name had been narrowed down to two, which were: Sir Mortimer Fitzure DeCunningham and Lord Reginald Vladimer Orsinoe. Between these two she wavered, first deciding on one and then on the other, and then returning to the first again, and she could not make up her mind which to choose.

On the subject of matrimony her point of view seemed to be diametrically opposed to that of our energetic business man. John continually insisted that she should marry him right away, and he persistently returned to the subject, no matter how frequently she diverted the conversation.

Gwendolyn was sure that a man who could not be taught to make love properly could never learn how to be a good husband. She made any amount of fun of his methods, and when he became very much determined that he would

have a favorable answer, she always fell back upon the fact, which he could not deny, that he had not saved her life.

He generally grew angry when she entrenched herself in this position, as he saw no prospect of overcoming the obstruction, and declared that he didn't care, anyhow; that there were plenty more girls in the world. But whenever he retired she advanced and coaxed him out of his sulky mood and the whole business recommenced.

However, John had really no idea of giving her up, because two hundred thousand dollars cash and thirty thousand a year were not to be picked up every day; and then, of course, he knew that she wanted to marry him. How could she help it? And, indeed, the evident pleasure which she took in the affair would have encouraged a much less sanguine man than John Cobbs.

He asked Gwendolyn to go with him to the Fair on Monday, but she declined on the ground that she could not bear to see a man risk his life so uselessly in a balloon. She had a similar objection to the performance of Tuesday, and it was only after John had ascertained that the bulls were to be destroyed in the same manner as the villains in Gwendolyn's novels—that is, in the imaginations of the spectators—that she would consent to go with him.

And so, after lunch at Castle Montmorency, we find this couple driving along the road to Judithland about half-past two o'clock on the day of the grand bull fight.

"I say, Lady," John remarked, "have you heard the news?"

"I haven't seen anybody from town to-day except you, and you haven't told me anything new."

"Well, I ain't had time to get 'round to it. Can't talk about another fellow's monkey show 'fore my own, can I? That wouldn't be business, you know."

"But tell me about it now," the authoress returned. "I am just dying to hear something new. Has anybody run away and got married?"

"No, they ain't, yet," John responded, with a self-satisfied grin. "But I bet you a dollar to a nickel that I run off with you some of these fine mornings."

"Now, Mr. Cobbs, this will not do at all," said Gwendolyn, smiling, nevertheless. "I told you positively when I promised to go with you Sunday that you were not to mention the subject of matrimony once to-day, and here you've done nothing but talk about it ever since we left home."

"Oh, you know, Lady, a girl just says those things. You don't mean it, of course. You like it all right. You're built that way."

"Indeed I do mean it, Mr. Cobbs, but if you will insist I suppose I can't help it. But you haven't told me your news."

"Why, our friend Davy got gay yesterday, and went up in the balloon 'stead of the balloon man, and I'll be—no, I mean he hung by his legs way up there in the air. I couldn't of done it no better myself."

"Oh, Mr. Cobbs! You don't mean Mr. Elmore? How awful! Was he killed? What did he do it for?"

"You can't prove it by me, Lady. I don't reckon he knows himself. I supposed, of course, he had a good stiff bet on it, but nobody knows nothing about it, so I reckon it ain't so. A fellow don't win a big pot that way and then keep it dark."

"But how about Mr. Elmore? Was he hurt much?"

"Hurt? No. He warn't hurt at all. Kind of shaken up, that's all. Didn't get downtown this morning, though. I asked old man Elmore about him, and he said he was all hunkey. Funny, though. Little C'lumby at our house

was hurt worse than Dave was. People say she just keeled right over when the balloon went up and they had to carry her to a hack. She ain't been downstairs all day. I warn't on the grand stand when she keeled over, so I didn't see her."

"I'm real glad I didn't go yesterday," said Gwendolyn. "I believe I would have fainted, too."

John looked at the great authoress with some apprehension.

"You don't often do it, do you?" he asked. " 'Cause if you do, just let me know in time to get a bracer 'forehand. Think I'd need it, sho."

Gwendolyn smiled.

"You are a funny kind of a man, Mr. Cobbs," she said. "How can you expect me to marry you if you can't support me? And you know that the hero always carries the heroine off, whenever it is necessary. I am sure that Dr. Houston would have carried Columba to the carriage if he had been there."

"He did that same thing, Lady, and that's a fact. But little C'lumby and you are two mighty different propositions. I reckon you can't have too much of a good thing, though."

Gwendolyn smiled again, but she did not reply. John's remarks had started her active imagination into vigorous movement. How superb it would be in her next novel to have the hero and the villain go up together in a balloon and fight a battle-ax combat among the clouds. What a glorious idea it was, and how entirely original. Nothing at all like it had ever been done before. And then when virtue triumphed, as usual, and hurled the miscreant to eternity, how dramatic would be the scene when the hero, bending over the side of the car, would watch the ignoble corpse grow smaller and smaller until it was dashed in

pieces on the earth; and then, rising to his feet, in clarion tones would defy the universe from a height of sublimity to which a character in a historical novel had never hitherto ascended.

Oh, it would be grand, grand. What a wonderful genius she was. She was filled with awe when she contemplated the greatness of her own mind.

Indeed, she was so absorbed in admiration of the intellect which she possessed that she scarcely saw the crowd around the gate to the Fair Grounds, where John stopped to deliver his tickets, and was only aroused from her reverie when he jumped from the buggy and offered his hand to assist her in alighting, with the remark:

"Here we are, Lady. You're mighty quiet all of a sudden."

As they walked towards the grand stand they were surrounded by a company of fakirs, who each offered his wares with the same zeal which a congressman displays in exploiting a conquered archipelago.

"Popcorn, Mister? Popcorn, Mister?"

"Get a balloon and be in the swim."

"You must have a souvenir cane. Only ten cents."

"Here's your peanuts. Five cents a package."

A tall man, some fifteen feet high, attired in the starry, striped costume which typifies your Uncle Sam, was standing near the entrance to one of the canvas booths. His expansion was entirely in his lungs and his legs, and, like his prototype, his brag was his strong point while his outlying dependencies were his weak ones.

He was now quoting poetry in stentorian tones.

"Oh *me*. Oh *my*.

"*Did* you ever *see* a lady *fly?*"

The next tent displayed a gaudy picture of the four-legged man, ambling gracefully around a tawdry parlor,

while his exhibitor endeavored to attract customers by calling out:

"How many legs have you got?

"How many legs have you got?

"I've got four legs.

"How many legs have you got?"

This man's costume on his right side displayed a vivid red, while his left was clad in an equally brilliant green. His face was colored to match, the line of demarkation passing between his eyes down the bridge of his nose. His sleeves were puffed very full, and every now and then his right hand, by some concealed mechanism, would shoot out about ten feet over the heads of the crowd and then return to him again.

But the blandishments of these showmen were of no avail at this time, because the bull fight was about to commence, and all the sightseers were hurrying toward the grand stand, to which Gwendolyn and John went also.

A temporary bull ring had been constructed by stretching stout wire netting from fence to fence of the race-track at each end of the grand stand and placing two barriers on either side near the center, behind which the *toreros* could take refuge when too closely pressed by the infuriated animal.

The *chulos,* with their scarlet-colored banners, had already appeared in the ring when our friends arrived. Although guaranteed by the management to be the genuine European article, their swarthy complexions betrayed their Toltec blood, and it is my candid opinion that they had never been any closer to Spain than the City of Mexico. However, they were attired in gaily embroidered jackets and knee breeches, with brilliant colored sashes; and, although somewhat ragged and dirty, they were nevertheless eminently satisfying to the visitors.

After some preliminary leaping of the barriers and other gymnastic exercises by the *chulos,* the bull was led to the gate by four men with ropes attached to his horns, and the ferocious animal was loosened in the arena, where he stood stupidly gazing at the scene before him.

The posters called him a bull, so of course it must be so; but, except for his half-grown horns, judging from its size, I should have called him a calf. However, he must have been a very dangerous beast, because about half of his horns had been sawn off and the stumps were adorned with large gilt balls, in order to prevent him from murdering his adversaries.

One of the *chulos* now approached him warily, and the onlookers held their breath. Pictures of bull fights where the furious quadruped rushed headlong after his rash antagonist rose before each mind. But somehow the rush was a failure. The *chulo* waved his banner. The bull looked at him. The man came closer and tried again. The bull blinked his eyes two or three times, looked bored and then yawned. The performance was not affording him much amusement. The *chulo* now flapped his banner in the animal's face, which caused him to shake his head in a displeased fashion, and then continue his stolid stare.

But some one came to the gate behind the bull and hit him a resounding blow with a buggy whip. Naturally he did not approve of this. He was willing enough to stay there to be stared at, although it did not interest him to any great extent; but to be beaten did not suit him at all, and he trotted rapidly around the enclosure seeking an avenue of escape.

This appeared to be what the bull fighters were expecting, for they darted to and fro in front of the frightened animal, waving their banners and gesticulating, until he

finally came to a stand in the center of the ring, apparently at a loss to know which way to turn.

And now the *banderillero* appeared with self-satisfied mien and stately tread. You know that in the real thing the *banderillas* are small barbed darts which the *banderillero* implants in *el toro* as he charges, and then escapes as best he can. In our more enlightened country, however, the points to the darts were necessarily omitted, as were also the *picadores* on the horses which the bulls are allowed to gore, in order to sate an insistent popular demand for blood.

The *banderillero* calmly took his place at the proper distance in front of the bull and held out his darts gayly decorated with orange-colored streamers. One could see from his fearless bearing that he was rapidly qualifying himself for the important position of *matador*.

According to the rules of the game, as soon as the *banderillero* appears, the bull must lower his head and rush madly at him, regardless of consequences. But our *toro* did not play fair. He was somewhat tired in the first place, and then besides he had not the slightest objection to the man standing there, and he obstinately refused to budge. In vain the *chulos* flapped their flags at him and beat him in the face with them. He declined to charge, and the spectators were beginning to laugh. Something must be done.

Two of the *chulos* went behind the animal and attempted to push him forward by main force, when a feature of the performance took place which was not advertised on the showbills.

There was a gate which opened from the narrow walk in front of the grand stand to the racetrack; and, as frequently happens, its fastenings were imperfect. Some

small boys climbing on the fence loosened it and it suddenly swung wide open.

The bull, seeing a way of escape from his tormentors thus provided, ran rapidly through it, and the crowd on the walk naturally dividing, he continued up one of the flights of steps to the grand stand, while the panic-stricken people fled in every direction.

John and Gwendolyn were seated at some little distance from the entrance up which the danger was approaching. He had been making many satirical comments upon the progress of the combat, but with the prescience of genius, when the bull started up the steps, he realized that his hour was come. Having the advantage of the elevation, it would be a comparatively easy matter for an active man to take such a small bull by the horns, and it would amply fill his requirement for saving Gwendolyn's life, and get him a good notice in the newspaper besides.

To think was to act. Springing to his feet, he ran towards the passage up which the bull was approaching.

And now drew near the battle of the giants.

When Hector rushed with flaming sword upon the heaven-born Achilles, think you he felt a tremor? When the young lion roared against Samson and he rent him with his hands, did fear enter his bosom? Even so courageously the god-like John Cobbs hastens towards his adversary.

But, alas! stern Fate has power to balk even the gods in their career, and how can a mortal contend against her?

As John with soul on fire advances to the contest, a stout woman with spirit quenched frantically retreats. And if an irresistible force meets an immovable body there is bound to be a smash.

John recovered himself as soon as possible and continued his course, but when he reached the avenue of peril

his opportunity had almost passed. However, if he could not seize the bull by the horns he at least caught him by the tail; but the sudden cross jerk, combined with his rapid forward movement, landed John on his back, while the frightened animal took refuge behind a lunch counter in the refreshment-room at the top of the building.

John Cobbs picked himself up, and, finding no bones broken, he returned somewhat crestfallen to the side of his sweetheart. But that young woman's organism was of entirely too sensitive a nature to stand such a shock with impunity, and as Miss Zenobia had come to the Fair in the carriage, she departed for home at once with her aunt, leaving her admirer to rub his sore bones and recover from his mortification as best he might.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE LIGHT FANTASTIC TOE.

IT was Horace Layton who went to the ball with Gwendolyn.

John Cobbs asked her to go at the same time that he requested her company to the Fair, but she very properly declined to go out with him twice with such a short interval between. It might make people think that they were engaged, without a sufficient amount of maidenly hesitation on her part.

This great social event took place in the hall of the engine house on Thursday evening during Fair week. Gwendolyn came to town to spend the night with Columba Wilmot, and as neither she nor Horace had anything in the world to do that evening, it could not be expected that they should dress in time. In fact, they reached the assembly-room as the concluding strains of the first waltz were dying away, nearly half an hour after Columba and Dr. Houston had arrived.

This was the largest ball that Judithland had ever seen. There were some twenty-five couples dancing, besides quite a number of married people looking on. For you are not to suppose, philosophical reader, because the story concerns itself with only a few people that there were no more in Judithland as refined and interesting or in any way disqualified to walk upon the stage in a play of this kind.

Most assuredly not. They all had their loves and their hates, and I could easily introduce them to you. But as the time which you have to spend in company with our characters is not long, if you meet too many people you would have no opportunity to become well acquainted with any, and therefore the remaining inhabitants of the little city shall be kept to march and countermarch across the background like Roman soldiers, and only occasionally be given speaking parts of a few words each.

The meeting-room of the volunteer fire brigade had been decorated for the occasion with festoons of colored bunting. On the rostrum, where the dignified chief usually presided, three ebony-hued fiddlers were now seated, who fingered their instruments with a loving touch, as if they begrudged every moment which was not spent in vibrating the air with their lively music.

As Horace and Gwendolyn entered they found near the door a little group composed of almost all our acquaintances in this story.

Even David Elmore was there, though it must be confessed with much unwillingness. David was overcome with shame at the termination of his escapade, and would gladly have hidden his face from his friends for all time, as he had during the three days just past. After believing that he was such a brave man, the humiliation of finding himself a coward seemed to be more than he could bear, and he could not realize that other people would regard him from a different point of view.

He did not know that the man who destroys himself is the coward, while the brave man lives to overcome his enemies and to remove obstructions from his path.

David only made up his mind to go to the ball at the last minute. Of course, he would have to face his friends some day, and so he suddenly determined to go and get

through with it all in one evening, and he entered the room a short time in advance of Horace and Gwendolyn. In his morbid condition he fully expected to be laughed at unmercifully, and he was entirely unprepared for the reception which awaited him.

Before David's arrival, John Cobbs had posed as the hero of the evening; for, although his audacious enterprise had ended so unfortunately, yet even to take an infuriated bull by the tail was something, and he had a great deal to say about what he would have done had it not been for his unforeseen interruption.

But when David came in John's laurels suddenly wilted, while almost all the merry-makers gathered around to bestow wreaths of praise upon the young aeronaut. It is true that the older people thought his adventure a foolhardy affair, and were thankful that he had escaped unharmed. But the younger ones all glorified him as a hero, and his hand was shaken and his courage admired until he was ready to sink through the floor, and was almost as anxious to evade the flattery of his friends as he previously had been to avoid their ridicule.

There was one person present, however, whom David longed, yet feared to see; but who persistently remained in the background; and it was not until the crowd around him began to thin out that he perceived Columba seated in a far corner with Dr. Houston.

The doctor had come to a painful realization this week. Columba's fainting when she saw David on the trapeze attached to the balloon and certain words which she uttered when her senses began to return proved to him, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the woman whom he loved had bestowed her affections upon another.

Now, with many men, and very properly, too, such a discovery would have caused a withdrawal from the race;

for one who gives his love ought to be content with nothing less than love in return. But it was different with Dr. Houston. So far from causing him to go more slowly in his career, it only made him the more resolved, and he was determined that hereafter no slights, affronts, or even downright insults should for a single day turn him from his course until the prize was won.

Columba rose finally, and with much hesitation and a look of frightened pain on her face she went towards the spot where David was standing, and of course the doctor followed her. They joined the circle just as Horace and Gwendolyn came in.

"Here are both our heroes?" Horace exclaimed, as soon as they arrived. "I tell you Judithland is doing fine these days. Two heroes in two days certainly breaks the record for cities of our class. You will have to embalm them both in your next novel, Lady Gwendolyn. You won't have to go away from home to find characters any more."

"Why, that's not the kind of heroes people want to read about, Mr. Layton," Gwendolyn responded. "Mr. Elmore just went up in the air and came down again by himself. He didn't save any girl's life, and didn't even have a fight with anybody."

"But you must admit, Gwendolyn," said Rosamond Lattimer, somewhat sharply, "that it was a very brave thing to do. Mr. Elmore is the bravest man I ever heard of in all my life."

"Why, of course, Rosamond, of course. I don't question his bravery. But what good did he do? He just frightened you all out of your wits. I know I should have fainted like Columba did if I had been there."

"I'll tell you what good he did, Lady Gwendolyn," said Horace, laughing. "He gave us all something to talk about. And here we are discussing Davy right before his

face, and he is blushing like a summer sunset. But if you don't think Dave is the right kind of a hero, how about Mr. Cobbs? He certainly showed that he was ready to lay down his life for his love."

"But he did not succeed, Mr. Layton," returned Gwendolyn, somewhat haughtily, as she swept onward towards the dressing-room. "A hero should never fail in anything he attempts."

"It warn't my fault, Lady," John called out after the retreating authoress, but she took no notice and soon disappeared from view.

"You ain't getting on a bit with Gwen'lyn, Mr. Cobbs," said Mamye Clay, gleefully. "She's hopping mad about something right now."

"I don't give a — cent whether she's mad or not," said John, angrily. "If she wants to do like a fool it don't hurt me none, I reckon."

"That's all very well to talk, Mr. Cobbs, but I know you don't feel that way. There ain't any man wants to have his best girl go off with another fellow."

"Why, I reckon she ain't the only persimmon on the tree. If she won't have me, Miss Mamye, I'll marry you."

"You better ask me first. How do you know I won't do you like Gwen'lyn?"

"Well, come dance, anyhow," he returned, as the fiddlers struck up another waltz. And she whirled away in his arms.

Columba stood listening to this conversation in silence. She wished to say something, but whenever she opened her mouth a lump seemed to come up in her throat and choke her. But she still remained there irresolutely, in spite of the hints of the doctor, and when the band began to play they were left with only Rosamond and David.

"It is too warm to dance this evening," said Rosamond,

plying her fan vigorously. "Don't you think so, Mr. Elmore?"

"This is our waltz, I think, Miss Columba," Dr. Houston remarked at the same time.

David heard both speeches, and was only too glad to have a good opportunity to escape from the ballroom and to avoid seeing Columba dance with his successful rival.

"Come out on the balcony, Miss Rosy," he said. "It is very much cooler out there."

As they turned away, Columba succeeded in uttering the words which she came there to speak.

"You must come to see me, Davy," she said, in a strained voice, her face changing to the color of snow. After this she went back to her corner and obstinately refused to move or speak to Dr. Houston until after the waltz was ended and some more of their friends sat down beside them.

"They have made up their quarrel and they are going to be married in November," said Rosamond, with reference to the couple from whom they had just parted, as she went out of the hall with David. "I had it on good authority. Columba's at work on her trousseau now, and Dr. Houston goes to see her twice every day. Mrs. Medlock told me so, and you know she only left Mrs. Wilmot's this week.

David made no reply; indeed, he thought Rosamond's statement to be only too probable; and they sat down at one end of the now deserted balcony and for a few minutes watched the stars in silence.

"Father says the Fair is going to be a great success, thanks to you, Mr. Elmore," said Rosamond, finally. "He says that, if they had been compelled to leave out the balloon ascension on Monday, after advertising it so thor-

oughly, people would have been disgusted and stayed away all the rest of the week."

"It was a very brave thing for you to do, Davy," she continued, after a moment's pause, with a great tenderness in her voice. "But you frightened us all so terribly. It was so considerate, though, in you to turn your back to the grand stand. If I had recognized you I think it would have killed me." Her voice sank now to a whisper. "If you had been killed I don't know what I should have done."

She laughed a forced little laugh, and then spoke more briskly.

"But tell me about it, Mr. Elmore," she said. "You must have had a beautiful view up so high in the air. How did it feel up there? Wasn't it nice and cool?"

To tell the truth, David had no recollection of his surroundings while on the trapeze, his memory retaining only his internal sensations. But as these were not adapted to publication, and as he must say something, he was somewhat unwillingly compelled to improvise.

"Why, yes, Miss Rosy," he said, "it was rather cold. My costume was not exactly adapted to cold weather, either."

"But couldn't you see a long, long way when you were up there? It must have been perfectly lovely."

"Yes, I could see a good many miles. It was a very fine view."

"Tell me how you happened to think about going," she said. "Was the man willing for you to take his place?"

"Why, he was drunk. I found him lying behind one of the tents, and as I didn't want the Fair to lose the ascension, I just took his place."

"And it was perfectly splendid in you to do it," she said, enthusiastically, but her voice softened when she

continued. "But I hope you won't risk your life any more, because you are so brave. Please, Davy."

David was silent and somewhat embarrassed. He did not understand how to receive a compliment gracefully. But a very much more complacent feeling in regard to his adventure came over him, and he began to think that he was really a fine fellow after all.

Rosamond again broke the silence.

"There's that young Tom Simpson looking for me," she said. "Turn your head away and maybe he won't recognize us. I had this waltz engaged to him before I knew that you were coming. I just hate to talk to boys, don't you?"

Now, as the boy aforesaid was a bare eighteen months younger than David, it would seem that David did not have very much advantage of him in point of age. But there must be an exact instant where a youth ceases to be a boy and becomes a man, and as Rosamond had had a long experience and had made a careful psychological study of the male sex, she certainly ought to be better qualified to decide such a point than you or I. Besides, it pleases a young fellow to be ranked among the men, while his slightly more youthful contemporaries are still considered boys.

But the fact that Tom Simpson was young was no sign that his eyes were not sharp, and he quickly discovered Rosamond in the moonlight, and came across the balcony to the place where she was sitting.

"Why, Miss Rosa," he said, in an injured tone of voice. "I've been looking everywhere for you. You'll have to hurry. The dance is about half over now."

"You could hardly expect me to look for you, you know, Tom," she returned, smiling, but without moving from her seat.

"No, but I thought you would come inside the hall when the band struck up. I never thought of coming out here."

"Why, it's so much cooler here. Take a chair, Tom, and sit down. You must be tired looking for me."

"Oh, no, Miss Rosa, come on. The waltz is half over, I tell you. You won't get any of it if you don't hurry."

"It's hardly worth while to go now," she replied. "You took such a long time coming for me. You had better sit down with us where it's cool."

"Oh, I can't," he returned, as he started away. "I've lost most of this waltz now. You mustn't blame me, Miss Rosa, for your missing it. It wasn't my fault."

"Funny how fond children are of dancing, isn't it, Mr. Elmore," said Rosamond. "No matter how hot it is they seem to think they must be dancing every minute."

When the music ceased a number of the young people came out of the hall and interrupted this *tete-a-tete* on the balcony, and Horace and Gwendolyn came with the others.

Gwendolyn did not dance. She would have taken pleasure in figuring in a stately minuet, but she considered our modern dances entirely too undignified for a person of her exalted station, and as minuets are out of fashion at present, she preferred to look on when she went to a ball.

She and Horace seated themselves in a corner of the balcony; but John Cobbs coming up a few minutes afterwards, Horace excused himself and allowed Gwendolyn's lover to take his chair. Our attorney was not the man to spoil sport.

The authoress did not say a word when John sat down, and for about half a minute she looked at the moon and he looked at her in silence.

But this rising business man never allowed an opportunity to pass unimproved, and in a short time he began:

"I say, Lady, ain't you going to speak to me? I reckon I ain't done nothing to make you mad."

"I have no desire to have anything more to do with you, Mr. Cobbs," Gwendolyn returned, with a haughty stare. "I am very much disappointed in you."

"Why, what in— No, I mean, what's the matter? I ain't done nothing to make you mad."

"You know very well what you have done, and it is entirely superfluous for me to explain."

"I'm dashed if I know, Lady. I've done everything I thought you'd like."

"You know very well you ran away and left me day before yesterday, when everybody was so frightened, and I came near fainting. No hero would ever have treated a girl that way, and I never will forgive you for it, never!"

John was entirely dumfounded at this accusation, which really was unjust, and for a few seconds he could do nothing but gasp. He had been so entirely confident that he had done everything a brave man could do under the circumstances, that this charge from the only person he had tried to please acted like a douche of ice-water. But it would not be business to refrain from defending his conduct, so he pulled himself together and tried to answer.

"Why—I—I didn't," he stammered. "I didn't, Lady. I tried to grab the bull, but an old fat woman stopped me."

"You know very well, Mr. Cobbs, that the animal never came within thirty feet of the place where I was, and it was not coming towards me, either. And you left me to faint there all by myself, after taking me into such a dangerous place, and a thousand people trampled over me, and you ran off to rescue some other girl, and I never will

forgive you for it as long as I live, and I never want you to speak to me again."

It is apparent that the greatest geniuses are partly human, and are swayed by passions quite similar to those which govern us.

John Cobbs was so exceedingly amazed that he even forgot to be angry. His conscience was entirely clear of the faintest idea of pursuing any other girl, because there was really no one in the neighborhood to be compared to Gwendolyn from a pecuniary point of view. If he had given her any occasion for jealousy, he probably would have been pleased that she should show it; but as he had not, he could only sit and stare and repeat mechanically:

"I didn't. I didn't. I didn't."

Another young man coming up just then, Gwendolyn went off to promenade and left her lover scowling at the stars.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### AN UNPLEASANT CALL.

DURING the following weeks David renewed his attentions to Rosamond Lattimer which had been interrupted during the period between the house party and the Fair. To be sure, his visits were not frequent enough to have excited remark in any except a very small town, where the topics of social conversation are entirely inadequate to occupy the time at the disposal of the inhabitants.

Indeed, he could hardly avoid seeing Miss Rosamond every few days without being extremely discourteous, because that young woman was continually inviting him to her house. She had little parties to which she asked him. A girl friend would spend the night with her, and she would request him to come to see her. And she always insisted that he should drop in to tea when he was out calling on Sunday evening. Receiving so much hospitality from Rosamond, as a gentleman, of course, he could not avoid occasionally asking her to go out with him, which always apparently charmed and delighted her.

Thus without directly paying David compliments, which always embarrassed him, Rosamond was continually showing him that he was a person of great importance in her life, and that she could fully appreciate his good qualities.

She frequently asked him to suggest books for her to read, and always took pains to discuss them with him afterwards, in order to show that she took his advice. At her request they recommenced the study of French together, and had *conversaziones* twice a week, where only French was spoken. They did not, indeed, conjugate the verb *aimer* in the first person, plural, present tense, indicative mood; but Rosamond thought she could substitute the future tense for the present, with an almost certainty that the future would stand still until the swift revolving wheels of time had overtaken it and merged it with the present.

Of course, David's love for Columba had not weakened in the slightest degree, and he had not yet learned that it is possible for a man to love more than one woman in the course of his life. He fully expected to live and die a bachelor, and that the name of Columba would be found graven upon his motionless heart, even as Calais upon the heart of Queen Mary. With his total lack of self-esteem he did not suspect that Columba had not finally rejected him, and her feeble attempts to attract him again were unseen or entirely misunderstood. If she smiled at him he thought she was laughing at his despair, and he resolutely tried to control his countenance in order to prevent any display of his inner emotions.

However, when four or five weeks had passed and November had nearly arrived, without any formal announcement of Columba's wedding; and, indeed, when her friends had charitably postponed it for her until spring, David began to think to himself that there was no reason why he should be angry with her. He could not blame her a particle because she preferred another man to himself, and so he resolved to visit her occasionally in a friendly way, just exactly as if nothing had happened.

In pursuance of this resolution he boldly marched up to Mrs. Wilmot's front gate one Sunday evening, but when he reached that point his legs somehow betrayed him and carried him on up the street. This would never do at all, and so, after glancing around to see that no one was watching, which, as the night was dark, was not very probable, he turned and forced himself to try it again. The second time he got as far as the front gallery, where, looking through the parlor window, he saw Dr. Houston calmly reading a newspaper. This appearance of proprietorship would have made him run again, and probably never return; but his steps sounded so loud in his own ears that he could not believe that they did not resound through all the house; and the fear of being laughed at, if anyone should open the door while he was going away, overcame his diffidence and he set his teeth and rang a timid peal at the bell.

The fact is that Columba and Dr. Houston had been quarreling again. That is to say that she had been quarreling and the physician listening. There is nothing which a weak woman enjoys more thoroughly or utilizes to a greater extent, if she has the chance, than the ability to impose upon and abuse a strong man. And as Columba was absolutely certain that the doctor was so much in love with her sweet self that he would stand anything from her, she generally said what she pleased to him, and found him a very convenient outlet for her bad humor.

This evening she was unusually severe, and Dr. Houston picked up a newspaper and commenced reading, whereupon she flounced out of the room. But, although she was not at all in love with the doctor, yet she by no means wished the doctor to cease loving her; and so she seated herself in the hall for the purpose of making up with him when he came out to go home. Thus posted, she saw

David when he ascended the steps, but as the shade to the other parlor window was down, he could only see a portion of the room, and did not suspect that Dr. Houston was sitting there alone.

David rang the bell and waited. No answer. If he could have seen Columba's face as she stood there irresolutely, and had been able to discern the signs of the times, he would have emulated the doctor and refused to take no for an answer. But, alas! he lacked the ability, and she was his first love.

He had no other thought but that the young lady and her betrothed did not desire any additional company, but he could not retreat now, and he rang the bell again. Still no response. He turned to go away, when Columba heard Dr. Houston stirring, and therefore opened the door.

"Why, David," she said. "Is that you? You were not going away? You get discouraged very easily."

"Why, yes, Miss Columba," he returned. "I thought there wasn't anybody at home. It's a fine evening, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. Rather chilly though, outside. Come in. You haven't been to see me for such a long time."

Here Dr. Houston opened the parlor door. As there were frequently visitors for the boarders, some member of the family generally answered the bell in the evening after the servants had departed, and he had not been in the habit of going.

"Why, hello, Dave," he said. "Come right in. Columba and I were just wondering why you hadn't been to see us."

Columba bit her lip. He, of course, had never called her by her Christian name without a title. But she could not find fault before a third person, so she said as they went into the parlor and sat down:

"Davy is too much interested in somebody else to want to see me."

"But, you know, Miss Columba," the doctor responded, "when a man goes to see a girl every night in the week he might spare a few minutes to come in to see us on Sunday."

"But I don't," David protested. "I don't see Miss Rosy nearly that often."

Dr. Houston laughed sardonically.

"Why, what a guilty conscience you have, Dave," he said. "Nobody mentioned Miss Rosy's name. It just goes to show that you think about her all the time."

"Why, I—I don't," stammered David, confusedly. "I'm not in love with Miss Rosamond."

"Looks mighty much that way," replied Dr. Houston. "But, really, you ought not to be ashamed of being engaged to such a nice girl. Miss Rosy was the belle of the county for any number of years before Miss Columba came out. Any man ought to be proud to have a charming girl promise to marry him. I feel that way, I can tell you."

"There's nobody promised to marry you, Dr. Houston," Columba broke out. "You take entirely too much for granted."

The doctor looked at her with an indulgent expression upon his countenance, as one would smile at the failure of a little child to grasp the object of her desire.

"Bless your dear little soul, Miss Columba," he said. "I don't tell you everything. I have a sweetheart over in Vicksburg, and I am going to marry her on the twenty-ninth day of next February."

Columba was decidedly discomposed. She was not quick enough to remember that the next February had only twenty-eight days.

"I don't believe it," she responded. "You don't act like you are engaged."

"Why, how should a man act when he is engaged?" the doctor returned, still laughing. "I can't go to see her and talk sweet things to her every night like Dave does, so I come up here to see you instead."

"I don't believe David ever made love to a girl in his whole life," Columba said, and she blushed slightly, but not so much as David did, who was thinking of his unsuccessful attempt in that direction on the front gallery another Sunday evening.

"Well, you just ought to hear him talk to Miss Rosy, and you would not think so," the doctor rejoined. "They tell me he does it up in the highest style of the art."

There was a slight pause in the conversation after this speech, and David, naturally desiring to change the subject, inquired:

"Did you go to church this morning, Miss Columba?"

"No, I didn't go," she replied. "It always tires me so much to go to church. I don't believe it does you any good to go when you get so tired. I haven't felt at all well to-day, anyhow."

"I dropped in at St. Andrew's this morning on my way back from visiting a patient," Dr. Houston remarked, "and the first thing I saw when I got inside was Dave and Miss Rosy sitting on a front seat together and singing out of the same book. They looked like a couple of married people, and they made a handsome couple, too, I tell you."

"Why, I didn't," David protested, as soon as the doctor paused. "I didn't go to church at all this morning."

"Really, Davy, you needn't be ashamed of it. There's nothing to be ashamed of in going to church with such a fine girl."

"David never went to church with me," Columba said.

Naturally he had not, because he asked her to go once, when she declined point-blank, and he never had the courage to ask her again.

"Of course not, Miss Columba," Dr. Houston interjected. "A man is not apt to ask a girl to go to church, unless he is dead in love with her. You'll have to go with me some Sunday."

David's visit did not last very long, for the doctor's continued innuendoes made it very unpleasant for him, and he was not capable of parrying such thrusts.

When he rose to take leave his tormentor continued:

"Well, good-night, Dave. I suppose we can't keep you away from Miss Rosy any longer. Come in and see us again some other evening."

Columba followed David into the hall, whereupon Dr. Houston promptly came after her. But she was not to be balked in this way; and so, when David had taken his hat, she opened the front door and went out with him, closing it behind her.

"Davy," she said, in a low, embarrassed voice, "you must not mind what Dr. Houston says. And please come to see me again. I haven't seen you for such a long time."

She might have said more, but the irrepressible physician came out on the gallery also and interrupted her.

"Looking at the stars, Miss Columba?" he said. "They are certainly brilliant to-night. You better hurry, Dave. Miss Rosy will be tired waiting for you."

David went home with a feeling of great uncertainty pervading his mind. Dr. Houston's assurance gave him every reason to believe in Columba's engagement; and yet, the few words which she said on the gallery made him think that possibly it might not be so. He thought that she might be only amusing herself in begging him to come

to see her, but there was a sincere ring to her voice which did not sound like deception. So he resolved to call on her again after a reasonable interval had elapsed; and he retired to rest that night in a somewhat more comfortable frame of mind.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE PIT OF DESTRUCTION.

"WHY, hello, Bo!" cried John Cobbs, as he walked down Main street that same Sunday afternoon. "Come upstairs and have a drink, won't you? I've just got some prime ten-year-old rye up there from the distiller direct. I'm dashed glad I quit buying from that dashed nigger. I get a heap better article for less money."

John's taste in liquors was not very nice, and he had been entirely satisfied with the blind tiger article. But after the proprietor of the illicit dramshop had failed him in his burglary enterprise at Castle Montmorency, he had, of course, withdrawn his custom. And when he had to send for his whisky he thought he might as well get it of good quality.

"Thanks, John," Horace Layton responded. "I don't care if I do. I haven't had a drink to-day."

John had entirely forgotten his grievances against the lawyer, and they had become fast friends during the month which had just passed. Sad to relate, Horace had returned somewhat to his old habit of drinking under the influence of the bookseller's continual supply of good whisky. Theoretically, he had no desire to become a drunkard, and he could bring many superior arguments to bear against the

custom of drinking alcoholic liquors. But, practically, it was easier to accept an invitation to drink than to refuse; and John's frequent solicitation made him imbibe much more than he otherwise would have done.

So they walked upstairs to John's bedroom, where each mixed a glass of the liquor from a quart bottle out of a case which the host produced.

"Here's to Gwendolyn," said Horace, clinking glasses. "Hope you'll have good luck in winning her."

"I don't know, Bo," John returned, rather sulkily, as he sat down on a cane-bottomed chair and stretched out his feet. "I've rather made up my mind to quit fooling with that girl. I'm no dashed nigger to be done like she does. If she don't know a good thing, I reckon there's plenty more that does."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Horace, sympathetically, but with an inward chuckle, nevertheless. "I noticed you hadn't spoken about her recently."

"Well, you know, Bo, I told you I went out there twice and that little nigger told me she was sick. I sent her out five pounds of Bylor's two or three times, and she ain't never sent no answer. She kept the candy, though, all right. Well, I went out there again last Sunday, and that dashed black devil told me she had gone driving; and I'll be dashed if I didn't see her looking at me from the upstairs gallery when I drove away. Cost me two dollars a pop for a buggy for nothing but her dashed foolishness."

"Why, bless my boots, man," responded Horace, laughing, "you mustn't mind anything of that kind. That's the best sign you could possibly have. All young girls treat the men they love that way. It is merely proper maidenly coyness. What you want to do is to go again, and to keep on going until she lets you in."

"But I ain't no dashed nigger to be done that way. I

reckon she does want to marry me, but why in h—l don't she say so?"

"My dear fellow, you can't expect to win a nice girl without taking some trouble. But she is worth it. She's a fine creature herself, and then think of her money."

"Well, I reckon she is. But what ought I to do, Bo? Dashed if I know."

"Why, it is simple enough. Just go out there again this afternoon, and if they tell you she's out, say you'll wait until she comes in. And if they tell you she's sick, say you'll wait till she gets well. And then sit down and wait. I'll bet you a dollar to a dime she comes out after awhile."

"But I'd look like a dashed fool sitting 'round waiting for a girl that way. If she wants to marry me, why don't she say so and be done with it?"

"I couldn't tell you why, John, but it is the way girls are constituted. They say that coyness in maidens originated in the old times when men went out and captured their wives with the strong arm and the women ran away. But wherever it came from it's here now, and the right kind of a girl will always treat a man that she cares for that way, if she has any reason to believe that he loves her. You had better take my advice and go."

"Well, you come go with me, Bo. Dashed if I like the idea of sitting 'round waiting for a girl like a fool."

Horace considered this proposal for a few moments.

"Why, that would not be a bad idea," he said. "Of course she won't turn us both away. And after we get in I'll talk to Miss Zenobia and let you talk to Gwendolyn. Yes, I'll go. I'd like to take a drive this afternoon, anyhow. It's such a beautiful day."

"All right, it's a go," said John. "Come up to the stable, Bo, and we'll get a turnout."

It was pleasant out of doors that afternoon. Although

there had been no frost as yet, the day was cool; and there was an invigorating freshness to the air and a glorious blue in the wide extending curtain of the sky which filled the wayfarer to overflowing with the pure joy of living.

On the low hills by the roadside great masses of golden-rod mingled bright clusters of yellow with the somewhat dingy green of their foliage. But these flowers, although alive, could not for an instant compete in brilliancy with the hue of the dying leaves of the "Pride of India," ordinarily called the "China" tree.

In the clumps of these trees the mingled greens and yellows were positively startling in their brightness, and contrasted strangely with the bared branches outlined against the sky, on which hung the somber berries. And yet, the painted leaves had fulfilled their mission in this world and were fast going to destruction, while the darkening berries contained the seed which were the trees' sole hope of immortality.

If I were now a moralist I could preach you a sermon on this text. I could show you how "man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart." I could prove to you that the tree lavishes the gaudy colors upon its worthless leaves, in order to attract attention from the virtues residing in the berries and thus preserve them from the hand of the spoiler; and that therefore, young man, you should marry the ugliest girl you can find, in the hope of obtaining a diamond of great price in its coating of blue clay.

But, as you very well know, people nowadays always skip the morals, and sermons are not so popular as they used to be. Besides, I am sure that no young man would take my advice, which would make me feel small, especially as I would not take it myself.

For, unfortunately, although your real ugly woman is apt

to be clever, yet she is generally bad-tempered, which is the most serious fault in the world. Let me marry a pretty-faced fool; may I be united to a slattern. Let her be dowdy or vulgar, or do nothing from daylight to dark. May she fancy that she is an interesting invalid and spend her days on a sofa. Let her even be a blue-stocking, and think she enjoys Browning, and talk learnedly of Schopenhauer and of Kant. But oh! good Hymen, in the great drawing from your wheel, deliver me from being mated with a shrew.

While I am talking Horace and John are driving, and in due time they reached the gates which led into the grounds surrounding Castle Montmorency.

The first thing which attracted the lawyer's attention when the horse stopped was a sign which had recently been posted over the carriage gate, and on which he read in bright flame-colored letters:

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

"Hum," Horace remarked, "that's not very encouraging for a lover, is it? I wonder what new game Gwendolyn is up to now. I guess she must have put that sign up there for your benefit. It's a plagiarism, too, and I am surprised that Gwendolyn should do anything of that kind."

"Well, what had we better do, Bo?" asked John Cobbs.

"Oh, we'll drive in and show her that we are not to be scared off so easy," returned the lawyer, as he jumped from the buggy.

But this was more easily said than done, for he found that both gates were not only locked, but absolutely nailed up.

"The lady is certainly determined to keep you out, John," said Horace, laughing. "This is what I call coyness run to seed."

"I reckon we'd better go back, hadn't we, Bo?"

"Well, I don't know about that. What do you say to climbing the fence?"

"I'm in for anything you are. You don't reckon those big dogs are loose, though, do you?"

"Oh, hardly. I don't think Gwendolyn would carry it that far. You see, you said you had been out here every Sunday afternoon, and she just wants to see how persistent you'll be. Anyway, you know faint heart never won fair lady, and we will get a couple of big sticks. I see some over there will do fine."

On the opposite side of the road someone had been cutting down locust trees for fenceposts, and incidentally chopping out some young mulberry saplings which had grown up where they were not wanted, and of these our friends each selected a stout specimen.

It was not difficult for active men to scale the carriage gate, although it was a high one, and John and Horace were soon advancing up the drive which led to the country mansion.

"I don't exactly see why Gwendolyn had the gates nailed up," Horace remarked. "It seems to me——"

But what it seemed to him will never be known to mortal man, for just at that instant the firm and solid earth gave way, the mouth of the pit yawned wide, and the attorney and his client disappeared from the sight of the sun into stygian darkness.

It was lucky for them that they had obtained the mulberry staffs, because, as they were carrying them on their shoulders, they reached across the mouth of the narrow hole and broke the force of a ten-foot fall, which otherwise might have had serious consequences.

As it was, the young men were considerably shaken up, and they indulged in a quantity of bad language, over

which we will draw the veil of oblivion until they cool down somewhat.

"What in h—l do you suppose this thing was put here for?" asked Horace, excitedly.

"Dashed if I know. But how are we going to get out of this infernal hole?"

The excavation was about four feet wide, and extended across the driveway leading up to the house. Its orifice had been covered with the branches of trees, over which gravel was sprinkled, so that the cavity was entirely concealed. As the sides were perpendicular and about ten feet high, the prospect of the speedy release of the prisoners appeared very slight.

Of course, they must try to escape, however; so John endeavored to support Horace on his shoulders; but as he was not very strong, and as the attorney was inclined to be portly, he could not nearly raise him to the surface, and they gave up the attempt in disgust. Even if he had been able to lift up his friend, there appeared to be no way in which the lawyer could support himself after reaching the mouth of the pit, for one of their sticks was broken and the other too weak for the purpose.

"Have you got a knife, John?" asked Horace, after they had somewhat recovered their breath. "We'll have to try to dig steps in the dirt."

"Why, that'll take us all night, Bo, and those dashed dogs will be loose before we get out. Don't you reckon we can make'm hear by hollering?"

"I hardly think we can, but we can try. What the dickens did Gwendolyn have this thing put here for, anyhow?"

But their shouting had apparently no effect in bringing them assistance, and John commenced to dig steps at one

end of their dungeon, which, as his knife was small, appeared to be an interminable enterprise.

John had been working industriously some little time, and Horace was looking up at the sky and racking his brains for a method of escape, when a most hideous crimson face suddenly showed itself over the edge of the pit, surmounted by a pair of short, red horns.

Horace could not believe his eyes, his first thought being that his fall had made him delirious, and he stared at the apparition in silence, who returned the compliment by looking fixedly at him in the gathering gloom of the evening, which, of course, was more pronounced under ground.

The devil first broke the silence in a familiar voice.

"Lawdee, Mister Layton," he said, "what you doin' down dar? I 'clar to goodness, I didn't know ye."

At the sound of Cato's voice coming from such a frightful source, a light suddenly broke upon Horace Layton's understanding and made clear even the obscurity of the pit. Gwendolyn was writing another novel, and John Cobbs' game was up. For the imperfect love of this mundane sphere could have no chance in her soul against the intense emotions conjured up by her vivid imagination.

John also recognized Cato's voice from his stooping position over the step which he was digging, and he started up with a sudden access of fury.

"You infernal black devil!" he cried, "what do you mean—" But just then he caught sight of the face gazing at him, and, seeing that his malediction so unexpectedly described its object, with the exception of the color, he paused astounded.

"Well—I'll—be—," was all that he could get out, until Cato likewise recognized him.

"Is you down dar, too, Mister Cobbs?" he said. "How'd you gemmons git down dar?"

"Don't stand there talking like a fool," Horace shouted. "Go get something and help us out! You suppose we came here for our health? What do you mean by digging a pitfall across your road, anyhow!"

"Lawdee, Mister Layton, dat's de bottonless pit whar de sinners goes down to de bad place; an' I ain't neveh suspected to see you gemmons down dar."

"Ain't you going to help us out?" cried John. "Dash it all, you think we're going to stay here all night?"

Thus apostrophised Cato rose to obtain means of assistance, and our two friends heard him soliloquize as he departed.

"Lawdee, I ain't neveh suspected to see you two gemmons down dar."

He returned after a few minutes with a short ladder, by means of which Horace and John speedily regained the surface of that world from which they had so recently departed.

John was still exceedingly angry, but the sight of Cato's infernal costume would have even dispelled the divine wrath of Zeus, and he burst into a roar of laughter, in which his friend joined, and which made the devil look exceedingly foolish.

The negro was attired in a close-fitting suit of a vivid red, which branched at his feet into what was supposed to represent claws, but which bore a much stronger resemblance to the feet of a duck, greatly enlarged. From the base of his spine a curiously contrived tail projected. This tail was about four feet long and an inch in diameter, and apparently was somewhat difficult for its proud possessor to manage; for he had restrained its vagaries by means of a piece of string tied to each horn. The foundation of

the tail was evidently a coiled wire spring, for it continually strained at its tether, and waved its barbed point from side to side as a scorpion waves his sting.

Cato's head was covered with a close-fitting hood surmounted by the pair of red horns which had first attracted Horace Layton's attention. But it was his face which presented the most ridiculous appearance. This was daubed over with red paint, and the contrast between the flat nose and thick lips of the African countenance and the aquiline profile and cynical smile, which are supposed to belong to His Satanic Majesty, was enough to make Horace roll on the ground with laughter.

As soon as the prisoners were released from their dungeon, the devil picked up a short, red pitchfork, after an apprehensive look towards the house, and stood leaning upon it awaiting the pleasure of the laughing gentlemen.

It was John Cobbs who first regained the ability to speak.

"What's the matter with you, Cato?" he asked. "Where in h—l did you get that funny dress?"

"Cato," said Horace, between his peals of laughter, "what's the matter—with—your tail? What made you tie it up? Can't you—wag it—any better than that?"

"Tail done bruck, Mister Layton," returned Cato, regretfully. "Done furgit an' sot down on 'er dis mawnin'."

"What are you wearing it for?" asked John, sharply. "Where did you get it, anyhow?"

"Miss Gwen'len git it fur me, Boss. What she say we all does."

"It begins to look like our game is up, John," said Horace. "Gwendolyn has evidently begun work on another novel, and you won't have any chance to see her until it is finished."

"Dash it all!" exclaimed John, angrily. "After all the money I spent on her, too. Look here, old man. Did Miss Gwendolyn tell you to dig this hole?"

"Dat's right, Boss. Dat's jes' what she did. She done say dat's de bottonless pit whar de sinners goes down to de bad place."

"But we might have broken our necks in there. Ain't you never thought about that?"

"How'd you git in de gates, Mister Cobbs? Dey'r done nailed up."

"That's right, John," put in Horace. "He's got us there, sure. When people climb in where they are not wanted, they must expect to take the consequences. I say, Cato, how long have you been a devil, anyhow?"

" 'Bout fo' days, Mister Layton. We done dug dis yere hole las' Chuseday. Tom done quit de nex' day, 'cause Miss Gwen'len want him to be a debbil, too. He's one dese here *Sadurday-Sunday niggers, an' he's feared dey'll turn him out'en de church. He's mighty feared dey'll hear erbout him diggin' de bottonless pit, but he didn't know erbout it till arter we got troo."

"But how about you, Cato?" Horace asked. "I thought you were a shining light in the Baptist Church?"

"Dat's all right, Boss. We ain't got no preacher now, so dat's all right. We done had Elder Tomkin, an' he sho did preach de word wid power and stir up de sinners wid de fire ob de bad place. But erbout two weeks ergo, when mos' ob de bredderen wus er sellin' dere craps, he git up an' say he want some money, 'cause he ain't had none fur more'n six months. An' Brudder Dawden he git up an' he move dat we don't want no preacher what wants to sell de word, 'cause de good book says she's widout money an' widout price. An' I done secon' him and she wen' troo all

* Seventh-day Adventists.

right, so we don' hab no preacher now, 'cause we ain't call no mo yit."

"But, look here, Cato," said Horace. "How are you going to get another preacher, if you don't pay him?"

"Oh, dat'll be all right, Mister Layton. Dat'll be all right. We's got a big church, an' dere's lots'll jump at de chance. Dat'll be all right."

"I reckon we better be going back, Bo," John Cobbs broke in. "There ain't nothing to stay out here for."

"Why can't we go up to the house and see Lady Gwendolyn, Cato? I don't suppose she works on Sunday, does she?"

Horace knew very well that Gwendolyn never received company even on Sunday when she was working on a novel. The fair authoress said that the sight of the outside world would entirely divert her train of thought, and though she did not generally work on the Sabbath day, she always maintained her costume and surroundings. But Horace did not wish to appear to be frightened off too easily; although he was not at all surprised when Cato replied:

"Lawdee, no, Boss! I'se sorry, but Miss Gwen'len turn me off, sho, if you come up dar. Hope she ain't seed you fo' dis, but reckon she's sleep erbout now."

As there seemed to be nothing else to do, John and Horace returned to their buggy, and Cato accompanied them as far as the gate. With the foresight of a prudent man of business, John presented Cato with a dollar, and strictly enjoined him to keep silent in regard to the misadventure of the evening, which the colored individual promised faithfully to do. Our bookseller did not wish to be the target for further ridicule in regard to his pursuit of the great writer.

"I say, Cato," said Horace, pausing for a moment on

top of the gate, while his friend was unhitching their horse. "Don't you get mighty tired standing up all day? I suppose you can't sit down in that tail."

"I sho git tired, Boss. But when Miss Gwen'len don't want me I lays down in fron' an' goes to sleep. I done furgit an' sit on ma tail dis mawnin' do. But I don't hab no work to do when Miss Gwen'len dress up, an' it's a heap easier dan workin', sho."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### AN AMATEUR INFERNO.

THE power to compel Father Time to go forward or backward at will, like the shadow on the dial of Ahaz at the word of the prophet Isaiah, is one of the chief privileges of the novelist. If it was necessary for me to recount the humdrum doings of each day as it passes, as we unfortunates are compelled to live them, the story would become practically endless for you, because you would be bored to death before you had finished it.

But I am trying to exercise a judicious selection and omit the least interesting events in the lives of our characters in the same way that many persons will skip the opening paragraphs of this chapter. For, of course, gentle reader, it is only the most intelligent people who are willing to read what the author says about his story.

I do not, however, approve of the way some writers have of making Time retrace his steps for too great a distance. It is hard on the old man to be compelled to go over the same ground twice; and, as Hezekiah said in effect, it is extremely unnatural for the shadow to go backward. I once read a story which began with the hero in his coffin, and then proceeded to relate how he got there.

So I will not strain your credulity to an excessive degree, and will only leap over nine days, which will bring us to Wednesday afternoon in the week following that which began in the last two chapters.

Dr. Houston had come into Cobbs' bookstore for the purpose of buying some reading matter for Columba Wilmot. Her taste ran entirely in the line of light novels and magazines, and he always took care to keep her supplied with the very latest. It was one of his cardinal principles to make himself indispensable to the woman whom he loved and to anticipate her wants as far as possible.

After buying his literature from Mamye Clay and arranging to have it sent up to Mrs. Wilmot's, the doctor stopped on his way out of the store to talk to Horace and John, who were standing smoking near the cigar case.

"Won't you have a cigar, Doc?" asked John. "I've got some prime Havanas in here."

"No, thanks, Mr. Cobbs," the doctor returned. "I stopped smoking a long time ago. You know a physician has to bend over his patients so much, and their nasal organs are generally so sensitive that I thought it would be the best policy for me to give it up."

"I reckon it's business," John responded, "but I'm dashed glad I never got in any line where I'd had to give up the weed. Dashed if I could get along without it."

"I remember very well the time your patient objected to your smoking, Jim," said Horace, with a smile, as he knocked the ash from the end of his cigar. "It was in Mrs. Wilmot's parlor one Sunday evening nearly two years ago. You had evidently been smoking just before you came in, and I suppose Miss Columba smelt it when she shook hands. Anyway, she said she despised a man who couldn't go to see a nice girl without reeking with tobacco, and a good deal more to the same effect, and I don't think you've smoked a cigar since. But, Jim, it seems to me that you are the patient, and not Miss Columba. That's been nearly two years ago, and you are not married yet."

"Dashed if I'd wait that long for a girl," said John, as he tossed his cigar stump out of the store door. "When she wants to marry me she's got to speak mighty quick. And, I say, Doc, did you know Dave has come shying 'round little C'lumby again?"

The doctor frowned slightly. He did not like to hear his sweetheart referred to in so familiar a fashion. But, of course, he had no right to resent anything of the kind, and so he replied with a self-satisfied tone to his voice:

"Yes, I understand Dave has cut me out entirely this past week. But it's as hard on Miss Rosy as it is on me, because he hasn't been to see her since Sunday week. And, speaking of angels, here she comes now."

"Why, come in, Miss Rosy, come in," said John. "We're just talking about you."

"Nothing bad, I hope, Mr. Cobbs," said Rosamond, pausing for a moment and bestowing one of her most cordial smiles upon the little group of men.

"No, I was just saying that little C'lumby had done you up again. We all just got to thinking you had a cinch on Dave, when off he pops after little C'lumby again."

"Well, come up and see me, Mr. Cobbs, and we will condole with each other," replied Rosamond, as she continued her stately course down the store. "I understand that you are not allowed at Castle Montmorency any more."

With which Parthian shot she left them, and after purchasing some note paper from Mamye Clay, she stopped for a few minutes' conversation with her.

John was dumfounded and could make no reply. He had extorted a promise from Horace Layton to say nothing about their late accident at Castle Montmorency, as he naturally objected to being laughed at any more in connection with Gwendolyn. He had likewise almost made up his mind to give up the authoress, if he could

find another match which was reasonably desirable. To be sure, there was no girl in the neighborhood who was worth nearly so much money as Gwendolyn was, and in her own right, too. But he thought that she was a fool, and did not know a good thing in the way of a husband when she saw one. And, besides, Horace assured him that it would probably be three or four months before he could see Gwendolyn again, which did not suit his energetic disposition at all.

When Rosamond spoke, his first idea was that Horace had broken his promise of secrecy, and he turned towards him with an angry scowl, but Dr. Houston's comment speedily set him right.

"Yes, Mr. Cobbs," he said. "I understand Gwendolyn has started writing another novel. We all thought that she was having enough romance in her own life to satisfy her, but it seems that we were mistaken."

"I wonder how far back Gwendolyn is going this time?" Horace remarked, meditatively. "She started with the revolution of 1688, and then went to Cromwell, and she's gone back from war to war until her last story about the crusades. I understand it will be out in January. You'll have to lay in a good supply, John. Her stories always sell like everything around here."

They talked about Gwendolyn and her novels in a leisurely manner for several minutes, until David Elmore entered the store.

"Mr. Cobbs," he said, "here's a check you forgot to indorse when you made your deposit this morning. Our runner is sick this afternoon, and as I was just getting through, I thought I would bring it over myself."

"All right, Davy," said John, as he took his fountain pen out of his pocket. "That's easy enough to fix. There

she is, as large as life. I only wish she was worth a million on the other side."

When David came into the store, Rosamond left Mamye Clay and came towards the front, which she reached just in time to hear John Cobbs' next speech.

"Oh, I say, Davy," he said. "I see you're shying 'round little C'lumby again, trying to cut out the Doc here. I wish you could of heard her to-day at breakfast. You ought to have been there, Hoddy. You'd laughed fit to kill. She was telling about how she kicked Dave on the front gallery last summer. She said Dave was a-crying until he made a big wet spot on the gallery, and she run upstairs and left him there. It was mighty funny. You ought to been there."

"I heard about it when I came down," said Horace, laughing. "Weeping must be the modern style of making love. Has Dave ever shed any tears over you, Miss Rosy? Because, if he hasn't, you know, you are not in it at all."

"I don't believe Mr. Elmore ever did anything of the kind," Rosamond returned, indignantly. "Anyway, I wouldn't have a sweetheart who would make fun of me that way."

David flushed crimson at the ridicule, and after standing still and looking at the group in uncertainty for a moment, he suddenly turned and left the store, followed by the laughter of the three men.

"My, my, Miss Rosy," said Horace. "Don't you wish you could get up a color like that? It would be worth a fortune to any girl."

"I think it is a great pity, Mr. Layton," Rosamond replied, "that men who have so much more reason to blush than Mr. Elmore has are unable to do so."

Whereupon she also left the store.

"Why, that's a kind of a slap, isn't it?" Dr. Houston remarked.

"Yes; she always does take up for Dave," said Horace. "Well, Dave is a nice boy, but I do love to tease him. He gets so horribly hacked. That was funny about Miss Columba, though, Jim. I guess you are pretty solid up there, but why the dickens don't you marry her?"

Dr. Houston did not reply, and when a carriage stopped in front of the store just then, Horace continued:

"Why, bless my boots, if that isn't Miss Zenobia. I didn't expect to lay eyes on her for the next three or four months."

And he ran out to the carriage as a man runs when he sees a prompt paying and liberal client.

"Good-evening, Miss Zenobia," he said. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Good evening, Mr. Layton," she replied. "I was looking for Dr. Houston. They said at the drugstore I would probably find him down here."

Dr. Houston and John Cobbs had followed Horace out, and they also exchanged greetings with the lady in the carriage.

"I hope Lady Gwendolyn is not ill," the doctor said.

"No, she's perfectly well, thank you, Doctor. That was not what I wanted to see you about. You see, Gwendolyn has begun work on another novel, which is going to be even better than the last. She's got a splendid idea for it, but she can't somehow succeed in working it out. She spanks Cupid all day long, until I've positively gotten tired of hearing the little wretch howl, but it doesn't seem to do any good. She's only written two pages in over a week, and she just can't get out any more; and she thinks she needs some more assistance. And that's what I came in to see you about."

"Anything which I can do, Miss Zenobia," Dr. Houston said, "I shall, of course, be delighted to do."

"Thank you, Doctor. You see, it's this way: In Gwendolyn's story the—ur—well, Beelzebub has carried off the heroine to the lower regions, and the hero, of course, goes down to rescue her. You see at once what a splendid idea it is and how entirely original. There's nothing at all like it in all modern fiction. She expects to make several very powerful chapters in describing the surroundings and the hero's combat with—ur—Beelzebub; but that is where she has come to a stop. You see, she has never seen anything of the kind, and never read anything of the kind, either, except in Dante, and she don't think Dante had much imagination, anyhow. She read his 'Inferno' all through, but she don't think it amounts to much. She says he missed so many good chances for fights with the devils. He just apparently didn't see them at all. She says nobody will ever read Dante any more after her story comes out. And so she sent me into town to get some help for a scene from the lower regions to give her an idea as to how it looked."

"Why, of course we'll help you, Miss Zenobia," said Horace. "It's been a long time since I've played the devil, but I think I can do it again with a little practice. How do you think Mr. Cobbs would do for chief devil? Don't you think he looks the part?"

Miss Zenobia put up her lorgnettes and gazed critically at the red-headed stationer.

"Why, I never thought about it before, Mr. Layton," she said, "but I believe he would do very well."

"Here, Bo, that ain't fair," John broke out; but Miss Zenobia was so much absorbed in the mission on which she had been sent that she did not notice this interruption. Besides, she considered that she was bestowing a great

compliment in comparing anyone to a character in her niece's novel, and so she continued, placidly:

"You see, we want to get a whole lot of colored fire to make a circle around Gwendolyn, and then a dozen or fifteen young men to act as devils, and one for the hero, to rush through the fire and rescue her. We only have one available man now, because Tom left on account of the costume; and, of course, we can't dress the women that way, because there never were any females; and, although we have Cupid dressed in red, yet we can't put a tail on him because—because—oh, well, it would interfere, you know. And Gwendolyn says she has no chance for inspiration without some more characters and some colored fire. So I went to Wood's drugstore to order the fire, but they don't know how to make it. Mr. Wood said that possibly you had some formulas, Dr. Houston, and so I came down here to see if you could help us out."

"Why, when I was studying chemistry I used to interest myself in fireworks a good deal," the doctor replied, slowly, "and I think I still have some formulas. How soon would you want it, Miss Zenobia?"

"Just as soon as I can get the men. You see, as I said, Gwendolyn has come to an entire stop in her story, and she is losing hundreds of dollars every day. Can you help me to hire some young white men, Mr. Layton? The negroes are all afraid to do it."

"Oh, we'll all help you, Miss Zenobia, if it is only for one or two evenings," Horace responded, cordially. "You won't need to hire anybody. I can get you twelve or fifteen men who are used to that kind of thing, and who will take great pleasure in playing the devil to help Lady Gwendolyn out."

"It certainly will be kind in you, Mr. Layton," said Miss Zenobia, "and Gwendolyn will appreciate it im-

mensely. She thinks one evening will be sufficient to furnish the necessary inspiration. How soon could you come out?"

"Why, this is Wednesday, and it will take some little time to get the costumes ready and for Jim to get up his fire. There's a performance at the theater on Friday and most of the men have engagements, and Saturday, you know, is the busy day. I am afraid that we cannot do it before Monday night."

"Well, that will do very well, Mr. Layton, and Gwendolyn and I certainly are obliged to you. Just get anything you need for the costumes and charge it to Gwendolyn."

"All right, Miss Zenobia," Horace answered. "Mr. Cobbs here has a lot of devil masks that will do first rate. Old Trescott got stuck on them years ago, and I saw them when I was taking an inventory. I think we know the costume of the infernal regions pretty well."

Here he winked at John Cobbs, who grinned ruefully.

"But how about the hero?" Horace went on. "You said he was to come in and rescue Lady Gwendolyn. What costume does he wear?"

"Oh, he's a noble Roman," explained Miss Zenobia. "And Gwendolyn is a patrician lady. He ought to wear the costume of a Roman soldier."

"Well, that's easy enough. I'll wire to New Orleans for a costume for him to-night."

"Couldn't you get all the dresses there at the same time, Mr. Layton? It might save some trouble."

"I don't think it's necessary, Miss Zenobia," said Horace. "It would be quite expensive and, really, those false faces with red suits and tails and a lot of red fire will answer just as well."

"And you can rely on me to furnish the fire, Miss Ze-

nobia," said Dr. Houston. "I'll hunt up my formulas this very evening. And I'll play the devil, too."

"Oh, I am so much obliged to you gentlemen," Miss Zenobia said, thankfully. "You have taken a great weight off my mind. I must tell you good-evening now, as I have some shopping to do; but I will see you again on Saturday. Drive on, Cato."

After the carriage departed, Horace slapped John vigorously on the back.

"Well, old man," he exclaimed, "you've got it at last."

"Got what, Bo? I ain't got nothing."

"Why, can't you see, man, what a chance you've got? Here's the lady positively asking you to rescue her, and from the devil, too. All you've got to do is to dress up in armor and drive away the devils, and you'll make yourself solid with her forever and ever."

"And put one of them tin things on my head again?"

"Oh, it won't have a visor. It'll be an open helmet."

"I'll be dashed if I do it. I'm no dashed fool."

And John Cobbs flung off angrily into his store.

"That will be the best joke of the season, Jim," said Horace, gleefully, as he and the doctor turned their steps down the street after the bookseller had disappeared. "We will get him to dress up and go out there to rescue Gwendolyn, and then we'll tie him and circle him with colored fire and dance around him. It'll be the richest thing ever was."

"Well, but how are you going to get him to do it?" asked the doctor, doubtfully. "From what he said just now I don't think it will be easy."

"Oh, you leave that to me. I know how to work him. He thinks Gwendolyn is dead in love with him now, and all I have to do is to convince him that she got up this

scheme just to give him a chance. It will be terribly funny."

"Y-e-s, but how is Gwendolyn going to like it? Won't it spoil her novel if we get the best of her hero? I can't afford to make Gwendolyn mad. She pays twenty-five dollars a visit. To be sure, she's doggoned healthy these days, but she might have a sick heroine in her story any time."

"Oh, Gwendolyn won't mind at all. In fact, I think she would rather have it that way. You see, she has just started her story, and if the hero were to rescue the heroine in the first chapter there wouldn't be anything else to write about. It'll be terribly funny. We'll tie him to a tree and dance around him and howl. It won't be the first time the devil has gotten the best of him, either."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE RAGGED EDGE OF LOVE.

DAVID left the store scarcely knowing what he did. He did not see Rosamond come out after him, and he did not return to the bank to put his books away; but he walked straight ahead, speaking to no one.

His heart was as nearly broken as it is possible for a heart to be.

The thought that he had loved this woman for years, and indeed still loved her; and she was so utterly dead to every sense of honor, of refinement, of kindness even, that she could make fun of the highest and holiest emotions that the human heart is capable of, crushed his soul to the earth.

He was the very personification of honor himself, and he would have been torn in pieces by wild horses before his lips would have breathed a syllable derogatory of the woman whom he loved.

The fact that, as he supposed, she was unwilling to marry him was as nothing compared to this. He had always hitherto thought himself entirely unworthy of her love, and that she should withhold it and bestow her favor on another man had never excited any resentment in his breast.

But now—now— She was the unworthy. She was as thoroughly despicable as the dirt beneath his feet. And his indignation began to give place to anger.

You know that Love and Hate are twin brethren, while Indifference is a very distant cousin.

He would show her that he also could be ill-bred. He would go to her house at once and upbraid her for her cruelty. But no! No! He realized that the tumult in his bosom would prevent his lips from forming the reproaches which his heart desired.

No, he would write to her. He would be bitter and severe and say cutting things which would cause her to quiver and shrink. He would prove to her that he could be brutal as well as she, and she would grovel on the ground and weep when she read them. Oh, he would hold up a mirror before her and she should see how base and contemptible her conduct had been, and how thoroughly unworthy she was of possessing the love of an honest man. He would go at once and——

What a fool he was! To think that a woman so infamous as to hold up his love to ridicule could be affected by anything which he could say! Rather would she take pleasure in his pain. Moreover, would she not show his note to amuse her friends? And he saw her read it to a group of men, his rival among them, who roared with laughter when she finished.

No, decidedly, it would not do. He must bear his pain in silence and display his contempt of her conduct only by indifference.

And then arose in his meditations the stately form and smiling face of Rosamond Lattimer. He thought how kind she had been to him, and how thoroughly congenial they were. She would never have treated him so shamefully. And for the first time in his life the idea that he might some day marry another woman than Columba Wilmot now came over him.

Why Columba should have done this thing is somewhat

difficult for the obtuse masculine mind to comprehend. Even a woman cannot always understand the impulses which incite a young girl to any given course of action. But in this instance I think that I can supply you with a wavering shadow of the cause of her conduct.

David had been to Mrs. Wilmot's several times during the past week, and the boarders, who had a suspicion of the real state of affairs, with their usual pachydermatous delicacy, had been teasing Columba about him most unmercifully at the breakfast-table. This embarrassed her exceedingly, and she tried to defend herself in the worst possible way by making fun of the man she loved and by exaggerating his embarrassment while she said nothing about her own.

For, my young maiden reader, if you are easily hacked, as the saying is, take my advice, and when people try to tease you, admit everything and more. Say you worship the very ground on which the feet of Edgar tread, even if it happens to be partially true; and then go on and state you are to elope with him that very night, and invite your would-be teasers to witness the rope ladder performance.

You may be certain that this will take the wind entirely out of their sails, for when you thus "blanket" them and take their motive power for your own, you win the race with ease, while their sails flap idly against their masts.

But Columba had too little experience to understand this rule; and, like most young people, she sought safety in denial, and tried to strengthen her position by ridiculing the person about whom she was teased, and in doing this she placed herself in another unfortunate position.

For you may also be assured, in affairs of this kind, that if your best friends can ruin your life by repeating what you say, they will run their feet off to find the proper person to tell it to. The only way to keep a secret is to retain

it in your own bosom, and the breakfast-table at a boarding-house is simply perdition.

Even if Columba had known, however, that David would be told of what she said, I doubt if she would have refrained. She was thoroughly convinced that he loved her, and her natural vanity caused her to believe that she could do what she pleased without changing him in the least. And, besides, she had a living example of a similar constancy in her other lover.

Dr. Houston went to church with her the following Sunday, and, most curiously, he was not called out once during the service.

"Miss Columba," he said, when they were walking home together, "I want you to go out with me to Castle Montmorency to-morrow evening to see Mr. Cobbs rescue Lady Gwendolyn from the infernal regions. It is going to be exceedingly spectacular."

"No, I can't go," she replied.

"But why not? Quite a number of young people are going. It may be your only chance to see Gwendolyn at work on a novel."

"I do not wish to go, Dr. Houston. That certainly ought to be sufficient."

"Oh, of course, of course. If you don't want to go that settles it. But a number of your friends are going, and I thought you might like it. Dave is going to drive Miss Rosamond out behind his father's fast horse."

She turned very pale and looked at him steadily.

"I don't think it would be proper for me to go with you," she said.

"I have arranged all that, Miss Columba," Dr. Houston returned. "You see, we wanted some chaperones, and Mrs. Medlock was just crazy to go, so a lot of us got around Mr. Medlock and finally persuaded him to go. It

was hard work, though, because he thought it wouldn't be clerical. But I told him the devils would get the worst of it, which would be exactly in his line, and finally he promised to go. You know I take rather a prominent part in the performance. I couldn't very well get out of it, because Lady Gwendolyn is such a good patient; and as I did not like to leave you in a buggy out there by yourself, I have arranged for a two-seated drag, and we will take Mr. and Mrs. Medlock with us."

"I think you take a good deal for granted in making all your arrangements before you asked me to go. I'm not going."

"Really, Miss Columba, I couldn't ask you until I found some man to leave you with out there. I tried to get out of taking part in it, but Miss Zenobia insisted that I should do it. David refused positively, so he could go with Miss Rosamond, but as they are going to be married in January, he had a better excuse than I had."

"That's not so, Dr. Houston."

"I think you will find I am right, Miss Columba. He's been to her house every night this week, and he went to church with her this morning, too. She's got a brand-new solitaire that is the finest stone ever brought to Judithland."

This latter statement was entirely untrue, but then you know "At lovers' lies, Jove laughs."

By this time they had reached Mrs. Wilmot's front gallery, and Columba walked across it without pausing.

"Well, I'll go," she said.

And without another word she went into the house and left the doctor outside.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE FLAMES OF TARTARUS.

IT was one of those glorious nights in November, for which our Southern States justly ought to be famous. People who have been fed on English literature, or who have spent their lives on some cold, damp shore, should come to the South in the late autumn if they wish to know what a perfect climate really can be.

The air was barely cool enough to allow a light wrap to be worn without discomfort, and it possessed a balmy freshness which made a man despise the narrow brick and timber caverns of civilization, and long to spend the remaining years of his allotted time, as his forefathers did, under the broad roof of heaven.

On the road to Castle Montmorency great sweet-gum trees interlaced their arching branches, as yet untouched by frost, and formed dark tunnels through which a joyous crew sped merrily. Not a breath of wind stirred their leaves, and save for the laughter of its human component and the sound of the horses' feet on the hard clay road, a mighty peace overawed the landscape.

The crescent moon danced winningly among her few surrounding stars in the cloudless sky and shed a copious supply of fairy light upon a mysterious world. Gladly would she have penetrated to the solemnity in the park at Castle Montmorency, but the magnolias were inexorable, and only permitted a stray beam now and then to creep

through their leaves and assure the company that, although excluded from their assembly, she was yet waiting in patience to light them on their homeward way.

But if the celestial light had been able to enter, it would speedily have been quenched by the infernal, for the fires of Tartarus were about to arise, and the "greatest novelist of any age," as the heroine of her own story was a prisoner in the realms of Hades.

From the place on the road where the vehicles were stationed, each with a man at the horses' heads, she could be dimly perceived as a white image under the trees, while dark forms walked to and fro between, and the few girls who had been permitted to witness the function from the carriages eagerly awaited the kindling of the fires.

The remaining preparations were soon made, and a bright, white light flashed up, which speedily spread until the noble patrician lady in the chair was surrounded by a circle of fire some twenty feet in diameter. It was fortunate that the night was still, for the dense fumes which rose straight up would have come dangerously near suffocating her had any breeze been stirring.

In the brilliant light the authoress was seen tied to a chair with broad, red bands. Her *palla,* or mantle, of pure white wool, the color of innocence, was artistically draped around her form to shield her from the chilly air, and it hid from view the greater portion of her *tunica.* Except for the broad blue band around its skirt, however, this latter garment was also white, so that it was hardly distinguishable from its covering. The head which contained her marvelous brain was bare, except for the long black hair, which was elaborately braided and twined about it. One large arm alone appeared to the view of the onlookers, the other being concealed by the folds of her mantle.

Leaning her chin upon her hand in her favorite position, Gwendolyn gazed fixedly upon the scene, while mighty thoughts rushed through her soul.

Some twenty demons, all attired in red from cloven foot to tip of horns, stood motionless around the circle of fire. The face of each was, if possible, more hideous than the other; for Trescott's masks were the best procurable, and well adapted for use on the present occasion. A pitchfork on the shoulder of each scarlet form warned the possible intruder that they were able to defend the inestimable prize which their leader had won.

And now the white light changed to blue, and with horrid yells the devils began to dance around the circle. Slowly they went at first, but they soon increased their speed, and leaped into the air and tossed their weapons aloft with Satanic glee, while their frightful laughter resounded through the night. They seemed to rejoice in their work, and to anticipate with pleasure the approaching tortures of their victim.

What thoughts passed surging through the brain of everlasting genius as she gazed upon her captors. Surely such surroundings should inspire her to work which would live on from age to age till time shall be no more.

I would not tell everybody, inquisitive reader, but between you and me, I will reveal that she was regretting the impossibility of photographing the scene at night and planning to have it repeated before the camera in daylight. What a splendid full-page picture it would make for one of the illustrated weeklies. "Gwendolyn Rowena Montmorency at work." "How the celebrated novelist produces her world-famous stories." That certainly was a splendid idea, and worth all the trouble of the preparation of the spectacle. Though to be sure, it had been somebody else's trouble; for Gwendolyn's only share, be-

The Flames of Tartarus.

sides writing the dialogue, had been in allowing her maid to dress her and in walking out to her chair.

Soon auspicious flashes of red began to appear in spots around the circle of blue fire, which signaled to the heroine the approach of her rescuer, and the fiends began to gather at the side of the ring, toward which, with mighty strides, the hero drew near.

He wore the Roman helm of the earlier period, with its smooth, round top and its cheek and neck-guards. His cuirass of bright steel covered breast and back over his tunic. One bare arm bore a convex shield of small size, while his right hand waved aloft the short Roman sword.

The red flame had now quite overcome the blue, and in its lurid glare the chief devil drew himself up to interrogate the intruder, while the infernal crew grouped themselves around him.

"Temerarious mortal!" cried the fiend, "how darest thou penetrate the stygian blackness of the pit and interrupt our diabolical revels."

"At the bidding of love," returned the Roman, "there is naught that I dare not do. Your devilish arts have enabled you to carry from the light of day one whom—one whom—oh, dash it all, one whom—whom I'm stuck on, you know, and if you don't let her go I'll bust your head."

"Think not, stricken mortal," the devil replied, "that the feeble arm of clay can contend with the everlasting essence which resides in the limbs of the inmates of these regions. Retire, retire, while yet 'tis time and leave your lost love to my pleasure. Never more shall you view her fairy form. Never more shall her bright eyes see the light of day. Here with me shall she spend the long years of eternity and shall reign the queen of all the devils. Retire, base mortal, retire, while yet 'tis time, and leave your adored one to my pleasure."

"You needn't think you can scare me," cried the soldier. "If you want to fight, come on, and don't stand there gassing all night."

"Prepare, then, for death, rash mortal, and as your soul takes flight let it remember that I possess your love."

Only the pen of a Gwendolyn, or possibly a Milton, could graphically describe the combat which now ensued in the red glare of the flame. Neither Homer nor Dante could have risen to such an occasion.

The soldier rushed furiously upon his foe with the short sword, which the devil met with his pitchfork.

To and fro they struggled amid the shouts of the semicircle of fiends, while the lady in the chair shrieked encouragement to her lover.

Blow after blow the devil received harmlessly upon his pitchfork, and for a time the issue of the combat seemed to waver in the balance.

But no! Look there!

The noble Roman is forced upon his knee. He rises, but again he falls. The maiden screams in anguish. With indomitable courage he continues the combat, one hand upon the ground, and again and again he wards off the fiery thrusts of the double prongs. Thus fought Christian in the valley, and thus the old enemy frequently gets the advantage of us all. Scream, maiden, scream, for your hero is in deadly peril.

In this world you may often remark that the actors decline to play their allotted parts. The child born into rags dies in satin, and the youth of the palace ends his days in the poorhouse. He who cannot buy books becomes the learned professor, while the owner of vast libraries is an ignoramus.

It was thus with Gwendolyn's romantic drama. In the stage directions, written out by her own fair hand, the

demons were to contend with her liberator one to one, with a due regard to fair play. After being forced to the ground and fighting thus for a time, the hero was to gain new vigor from Mother Earth, spring to his feet, put the fiends to flight and carry the lady to her castle in the upper world.

But whether it was that demons are naturally perverse and have a hatred of fair play, or whether due to a signal from their leader, I know not; but certain it is that the horrid throng rushed upon the prostrate hero, bound him to a tree in a jiffy, and while wild yells drowned his execrations, they performed a Satanic dance around him in a glare of green fire.

The chief devil left his company at the beginning of this attack and took his place beside a female form on the rear seat of a drag, which a few minutes afterwards started down the road.

"Why, look a-here, Dr. Houston," said a lively woman's voice from the front seat, "that wasn't the way I expected it to end."

"You are right, Mrs. Medlock," the doctor replied. "And it wasn't the way Mr. Cobbs expected it to end, either. But it was funny, wasn't it?"

"Cobbs will be fighting mad about that thing," Mr. Medlock said, laughing. "You fellows had better keep out of his way for a few days until he cools down."

"He hasn't any idea who they were," returned the physician. "He knew that Horace and I were to be in it. He had to practice the combat with me. But I never touched him, and Horace was conveniently called out of town this afternoon and went and told him how sorry he was. That was the reason we made him go out first this evening, so he couldn't find out who were in it."

"But how are they going to turn him loose?" asked the preacher. "He's fighting mad right now."

"Why, they are not going to. They'll be along pretty soon after us."

"You're not going to leave him there all night, Dr. Houston," said Columba, sharply.

"Oh, no. Cato will untie him after we get a good start. You needn't worry, Miss Columba. His buggy is out there, and he won't have any trouble in getting to town."

"Don't you think Gwendolyn will have her hero into the house and give him something to revive him?" asked Mrs. Medlock. "I certainly should, if I were she."

"I couldn't say, Mrs. Medlock," the doctor answered, laughing. "But I don't think Lady Gwendolyn approves of heroes who get the worst in their fights. I doubt if he sees any more of her to-night."

"It was real mean to treat him that way," Mrs. Medlock remarked. "But I declare it was awfully funny. How he must have felt when he was tied to a tree just when he was expecting to rescue his lady-love. Your scene was very realistic, too, Dr. Houston; but for goodness' sake don't tell anybody Mr. Medlock and I were out here. Our congregation would never get over it."

"Yes, and I think I was inveigled out here under false pretenses, Doctor," Mr. Medlock observed, good-naturedly. "It seems to me that I remember being informed that the devils were to get the worst of it. It is not in my line of business to assist at a function where a soul is overcome by the principle of evil."

The doctor made a laughing reply, and the three continued the conversation with small assistance from Columba. This lady had looked very little at the performance in the park. She did not like such sights in the first place; and, besides, she spent her time in watching the occupants of

a buggy not far distant, in which a black figure appeared beside a large white one. She had recognized Rosamond Lattimer in her famous shawl, now finished, wonderful to relate, and she easily guessed who the man was with her.

The drag had gone through the park gate and had traveled some little distance on the road to town, when the quartet heard the sound of a horse's feet approaching rapidly behind them.

"Look there, Miss Columba," whispered Dr. Houston, as the buggy passed them. "What did I tell you Sunday?"

And, indeed, in the moonlight, a black band about the size of a man's arm could be distinctly seen around Rosamond Lattimer's waist.

Columba gave only one look, and then resolutely turned her face away. She took no part in the conversation, not even replying when spoken to, and said nothing more until she and Dr. Houston were alone on her own front gallery. Mr. Medlock had kindly offered to return the drag to the stable. He had not yet forgotten the time when he was courting, himself.

"Dr. Houston," Columba began, in an agitated tone which was scarcely audible, "you have several times asked me to marry you."

"True, Miss Columba, and I have not changed my mind."

"Would you marry me when I don't care for you at all?"

"Certainly I would. That will come later."

"Well," she said, hastily, her voice in a quiver, "I'll marry you to-night. Go call Mr. Medlock back. Hurry up."

"What! to-night, Miss Columba?" he asked, wonderingly, "to-night?"

"I said to-night, Dr. Houston."

"But look at my costume. You surely cannot mean to-night. Why not to-morrow or next week?"

And he opened his long overcoat and faintly displayed his suit of red in the light of the now setting moon. He had left his mask in the drag.

"It will be to-night or never," she returned. "You can take your choice."

"Why, of course, Miss Columba, I am only too glad to marry you at any time. I was a little bit surprised, that's all. It's just twelve o'clock, and I'll go change my clothes and get Mr. Medlock and a license. You can expect me back about two, and we will take the three o'clock train for New Orleans. If you only knew how——"

"No, you are not to kiss me," she said, and she went into the house and shut the door.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MAMYE HAS THE LAST WORD.

HOW did David Elmore feel the next morning when he was told about the marriage of the woman whom he had loved ever since he could remember? Although he was sure she was unworthy, yet, of course, he still loved her. Real love is not so easily overcome, and even if it never forgives a serious offense, it yet takes time, a long time, for its annihilation.

But he felt very much as King David felt on the death of his child. While the loss of his lady-love was only prospective, his despair was great, and almost led him to the grave of a suicide. After the blow had fallen, however, and his sweetheart was irretrievably wedded to another man, he grieved in secret, it is true; but he presented a calm exterior to the outside world, and people speedily forgot his fondness for Columba and busied themselves with speculating how soon Rosamond would become his wife.

After all, how few of us marry our first loves. We rave and sigh and versify over Saccarrissa, which naturally bores her, and then we calmly settle down and marry Martha, who is an excellent housekeeper, and has a nice little income all her own. We do not sigh any more, and we seldom even read poetry; but we are very comfortable and have a growing family of interesting children gathered around us.

But to you, my dear maiden, who have so patiently and

sweetly borne with me through the story to the very last chapter, I owe an apology. Bless your little heart, I know the kind of fiction you adore. You wish a heroine who is the most ravishingly beautiful creature the world has ever seen, and for a hero the strongest and handsomest man who ever lived. The fact that they appear in every romance with different names does not matter. They must have troubles and misunderstandings, of course, but you always look forward with joyous anticipation to the last chapter, where the wedding takes place.

Really, while you think such tales are perfectly lovely and you thoroughly enjoy every minute of them, they are entirely unnatural, and it may be as well that you should read a plain, ordinary story once in awhile to prevent you from having too high a standard by which to measure your lovers.

If every man was compelled to save a woman's life before he married her, as Lady Gwendolyn, and in fact most novelists insist, there would be but few weddings in this world. And if the opportunities were to come as they do in stories, I fear that it would be necessary to revive the songs about dead maidens our mothers were so fond of.

Even in the old romantic days you pine for, the knight of the Kingdom of Micomicon was almost nonexistent. The ideal of chivalry required that he should gladly lay down his life for the protection of the ladies and the poor and defenseless. But if you delve somewhat deeply into history you will find that in practice the good knight spent his time in oppressing the weak. He fought for his wife, of course, just as he fought to save his other property. But if it came to the pinch of sacrificing his lady to save his own skin, or even his castle, his lady generally went. He could get another wife much easier than he could get another skin, or another castle.

I see Mrs. Medlock coming this way with Mamye Clay, and of course you know that women must always have the last word. It is Thursday afternoon in the same week which we have been considering.

"Did you know Dr. Houston and Columba came back this morning, Mamye?" Mrs. Medlock inquired.

"Yes'm. I saw him at a distance myself. They stayed a mighty short time."

"Yes, he said he couldn't leave his patients any longer. They tell me that he smoked a cigar the day after the wedding—you know how Columba despises it—and when she started to object he told her politely that he had been putting up with her bad temper for three years, and that it was his turn to rule now. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if she wound up by falling in love with him. Girls are such funny creatures. Did anybody tell you about the wedding the other night?"

"Why, no ma'am. I haven't heard anything."

"Mr. Medlock never tells anything, except to me, and I have to pump him until it's horribly exasperating. But I never let him rest until I get everything out of him. Dr. Houston came after him just as we were taking a little lunch before going to bed. He had found the clerk somewhere downtown and got his license. He had to go change his clothes, but he came back in about an hour, and he and Mr. Medlock went off together. I wanted awfully to go, but he wouldn't ask me, although I hinted around a good deal. He didn't seem to be in a very good humor, either. Mr. Medlock didn't come back for more than two hours, and he wouldn't tell me anything at all that night, but I got it all out of him afterwards."

"I think it was a mighty funny way to get married," said Mamye, much interested, when Mrs. Medlock paused to take breath.

"Yes, it was, Mamye. I think Columba's a big little fool. Mr. Medlock said that when they got over there the parlor was lit up, but they had to wait a long time before she and her mother came down. He said Columba's eyes were all red and swollen, and she never said a word, but just went through the ceremony, and they barely had time to catch the three o'clock train. After they were gone Mr. Medlock says Mrs. Wilmot just broke down and went to crying, and let it all out. That woman never did have any backbone. I don't see how she has ever managed to keep a boarding-house. I never would have let my daughter marry a man that way."

"Why, how was it, Mrs. Medlock?"

"Why, she said Columba came upstairs and made her start packing her trunk, and then regularly went into hysterics, and she had no end of a time with her. She said David Elmore proposed to her last summer and she ran upstairs and left him. She just couldn't help it. And he wouldn't come back, and she encouraged Dr. Houston just for spite, and he was going to marry Rosamond Lattimer; and she wished she was dead; and she saw him with his arm around Rosamond; and she was going to marry Dr. Houston; and Mrs. Wilmot said she cried and went on at a great rate. And, really, Mamye, it wasn't anything but the back of the buggy. Mr. Medlock and I both thought he had his arm around Rosy when they first passed, but when they got to a lighter place in the road we saw what it was. I think Columba was a big little fool."

"That was a funny wedding," Mamye said.

"Yes, and as I said, Mamye, I shouldn't be a bit surprised if Columba fell dead in love with her husband. Women are queer creatures, anyhow. They love to impose on a man, and they despise him if he lets them do it. There was a man in love with me once who would stand

anything in the world I did, and the way I used to impose on him was a caution. I remember once I had promised to go driving with him, and he came after me with a pair of fine bay horses which were so frisky he couldn't leave them alone in the street. There wasn't anybody to hold them for him. And I kept him sitting there in that buggy for more than an hour, while all the neighborhood was laughing at him, and then sent him word I had changed my mind and wouldn't go. And, bless you, he came to see me that very night, and never said a word about it. I hate a man with so little spirit."

"Do you think David will marry Rosy now, Mrs. Medlock?" Mamye asked.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he did in course of time. She has apparently made up her mind to marry him, and a girl like her can get almost any man she chooses, if she only has a fair chance. I could have married any man I knew when I was Rosy's age. And, really, Mr. Elmore will do a great deal better if he marries her. Men never know what's good for them, anyhow. She is unquestionably the best-looking unmarried woman in this part of the country, and she has more sense in her little finger than Columba's got in her whole head. She thoroughly understands how to manage him, too. Oh, by the way, Mamye. I wanted to ask you. How did Mr. Cobbs like the way they treated him the other night?"

"Why, he's been mad as a hornet all the week. I keep out of his way all I can. He wants to fight, but he hasn't found out who did it. Mr. Layton said he was out of town, and Mr. Medlock told him Dr. Houston came to you before the other men jumped on him, and he ain't found out who they were. And then when he heard that Gwendolyn had gone, he was madder than ever."

"Gwendolyn has actually gone, has she?"

"Yes'm. She and her aunt went to Europe yesterday. Mr. Layton is going to run her place for her while she's gone. She told him she didn't know when she'd come back. She said her hero getting so badly beat was too much for her story, and she'd given it up."

"So that is the end of Mr. Cobbs' matrimonial scheme," observed Mrs. Medlock. "I guess you'll have to marry him yourself, Mamye."

"I only wish I could," said Mamye Clay.

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Have you ever remarked the patient perseverance which the world displays in whirling around? We cling to its surface, get all of it that we can, and at last are thrown off into eternity. But still the old earth turns and turns, with never a thought of us. Among so many revolutions it would really be surprising if two or three were not effected in the hearts of our young friends, whom we are about to leave forever.

Nearly a thousand of the earth's daily movements were required to verify Mrs. Medlock's prediction, and that lady herself had revolved away from Judithland in the Methodist itinerancy, before the stars twinkled joyfully upon a June evening when Rosamond and David were married.

After Dan Cupid has conducted his worshipers down the church aisle, amid the entrancing strains of the wedding march, he transfers their adoration to his brother Hymen, and departs in search of other followers. And as the giddy little god is satisfied with his work, we may be likewise, and rest assured that love and a minister are the only requisites for a happy marriage.

Prominent among the guests at the wedding were Mr. and Mrs. John Cobbs. For, some time before this, Mamye Clay had taken her employer's advice and changed her situation. John thought that if he could not marry a girl who had money, he at least could get one who was worth it; and

if Mamye was not worth a million as a wife it was not because she had missed her vocation.

Dr. and Mrs. Houston live with the doctor's mother, and two tiny children play in their front yard. Instead of one woman to sing his praises, the good doctor now has two; and the dowager continually points to her daughter-in-law as a wonderful example of her son's skill. For you must be told that Columba has grown stout. I personally believe that her improved health is due to the change of her thoughts from herself to her husband and children, and not to any other medicine. Besides, you know, that if a doctor has good sense he does not often prescribe for his own family.

The great authoress is still in Europe. The shock of that fatal night was too much for her delicate nerves, and it seems to have cut short the production of her novels. This is hard on her admirers, and I understand that she daily receives many requests for more, but so far she has not felt able to comply.

Horace Layton continues his practice in the same old way. He thinks that both politics and love are too much bother, and after his sad experience I do not believe that we ought to blame him. He has made no more trips to the infernal regions, and has entirely given up playing the devil. This is as it should be; for after a man has sown his wild oats it is best for him to leave them, if possible, and to allow his crop to remain in the field unreaped.

THE END.

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